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MR. FROUDE AND CARLYLE

"The crabbed moralist had some show of reason who said: To judge of an original contemporary man, you must, in general, reverse the world's judgment about him; the world is not only wrong on that matter, but cannot on any such matter be right.

"One comfort is, that the world is ever working itself righter and righter on such matters; that a continual revisal and rectification of the world's first judgment on them is continually going on. For, after all, the world loves its original men, and can in no wise forget them; not till after a long while; sometimes not till after thousands of years."—CARLYLE'S ESSAYS, *Mirabeau.*

MR. FROUDE AND CARLYLE

By

David Wilson

London
William Heinemann
1898

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PREFACE

THE author of this book hopes ultimately to publish a "Life of Thomas Carlyle," telling the true story of Carlyle's life in detail, and gathering together in a duly sifted condition everything interesting and authentic that can be discovered regarding him. That work, however, is not likely to be finished for many years.

In the meantime, any one who can in any way assist in elucidating any fact relating to Carlyle, however apparently insignificant, would confer a favour on the author by writing to him. Were it only a clue to the residence of any one who has spoken with Carlyle or done business with him, or of any one who may be willing to show and allow a copy to be made of any authentic letter, no scrap of information, however slight, can fail to be welcome.

The author's thanks for courteous permission to quote are due to Mr. Alexander Carlyle and to Miss Froude, and to many authors and publishers, including Professors Norton, Masson, and Ritchie, Sir C. G. Duffy, Mr. Espinasse, Mr. Symington, Mr. Alexander Gardner, the editors of the *Nineteenth Century* and *Contemporary Review* and other magazines, Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., Swan Sonnenschein & Co., A. & C. Black, Hodder & Stoughton, and Macmillan & Co.

The edition of the "Reminiscences" quoted is Professor Norton's.

For much hitherto unpublished matter, the author's

thanks are particularly due to many ladies and gentlemen. For the information of those who have assisted him but see no use made of their work here, it may be remarked that this is not a complete account of Carlyle's life, but only an argument on certain aspects of it. There are delusions current which must be demolished before any truthful biographer can hope for a hearing. To those whose advice has been invaluable help, it would be premature to give thanks now.

As a rule the names of those who supplied new material are not now given; but as names must often be given, at least in notes, in the final work, those who supply information and desire their names to be withheld should inform the author of their wishes. Names which he is expressly requested or which he can guess he is expected to withhold, shall of course never be mentioned.

The author hopes that publicity will be given to his appeal for information by the courtesy of many editors.

Many footnotes have been omitted, to "lighten the book." Perhaps what remain are enough.

The correction of proofs and the preparation of an index have perforce to be left to others, when "half the convex world intrudes between" the writer and his printers.

D. W.

MOULMEIN, BURMA, 1898.

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CHAPTER I

THE NEED FOR INVESTIGATION

DURING the closing years of his life Thomas Carlyle often visited his favourite sister, Mrs. Aitken, at her house in Dumfries, and many times she urged him to name his biographer. He always said only, "I wish to have no biography," and turned the conversation to something else. One morning at breakfast she expatiated on the subject, and though he remained silent she argued at length, as women will, "It is not for *you* to decide whether you will have a biography. Many persons will write biographies of you, whether you wish it or not." He answered nothing at the moment, but as he was leaving the breakfast table there was, says one who was there, a "far-away" look on his face, and he said softly, as if half in soliloquy, "Yes, there will be many biographies."

Is not that a prophecy which has been fulfilled? In 1881 Carlyle died, and already (1897) about a score of biographies have been published. Surely the public should now know sufficiently the important facts of his laborious but quiet, unobtrusive life. They do not know them. The current notions of Carlyle are strangely erroneous. "It has been a personal pain to me in recent times," writes Sir C. G. Duffy, "to find among honourable and cultivated people a conviction that Carlyle was hard, selfish, and arrogant. I knew him intimately for more than an entire generation, . . . and I found him

habitually serene and considerate, never . . . arrogant or impatient of contradiction." [1]

That Carlyle was "a man of generous nature," a man genial and kind, unselfish and affectionate beyond most other men of his generation, is certain. That the majority of "honourable and cultivated" people believe him the reverse of all this is also certain. The explanation is to be found in the faults of his biographers, and chiefly of the author of what is still esteemed by many the "standard" Life, Mr. James Anthony Froude.

It has been too much the fashion for those who admired Carlyle to say: "What Mr. Froude says is true, but we admire Carlyle all the same." If all Mr. Froude says is true, it is impossible to admire Carlyle even as much as Mr. Froude did. Mr. Froude records really shameful conduct on Carlyle's part, for which thoughtlessness is no sufficient excuse in such a man. It seems strange that succeeding biographers have not gone beyond Mr. Froude's work. Dr. Garnett's little biography is partly an exception; but as a rule the biographers of Carlyle, who wrote after Mr. Froude, seem to have been charmed by him, or too much "pressed for time" to criticise him. One of them, when recently questioned, remarked by way of excuse: "It was only when I was nearly done that I discovered Mr. Froude could not be trusted." Others, including one of the most recent, have apparently finished their work without ever discovering that.

For the sake of future biographers, therefore, and for the benefit of all those who prefer fact to fiction, it seems to be now a duty to investigate Mr. Froude's account of this great man, exactly as one might sift any narrative relevant to a judicial proceeding. Can we believe Mr. Froude or not? How far can we trust his word? This

[1] Duffy's "Conversations with Carlyle," Part I. p. 6.

is to all students of Carlyle the one interesting question about Mr. Froude.

I have investigated it during the last few years, and began the work with considerable admiration of Mr. Froude, based upon the pleasure received from his other writings. The gradual discovery that his "Thomas Carlyle" was quite untrustworthy was reached slowly and with great reluctance. The fact is now stated with even more reluctance. It is a sad task to proclaim the faults of any man who is in some ways better than the average, doubly sad when such a man has passed away. I began the investigation while he lived, and for a time thought of desisting when he died. To draw his frailties from their dread abode is a thing one shrinks from, and shall not do without necessity. Nevertheless even now a brief statement of a few of the things discovered may be of service to earnest readers, and seems due to the memory of Thomas Carlyle.

At the outset it is necessary to call attention to the discoveries and criticisms of others. For example, Professor Norton, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, has edited seven volumes of Carlyle's correspondence, and re-edited the "Reminiscences." One would think it impossible for any biographer of Carlyle to ignore his work, yet biographers have been found to do so. Let him be the first witness, and for brevity on one point only—Mr. Froude's treatment of the love-letters that passed between Carlyle and Miss Welsh before they were married.

Most admirers of Carlyle were distressed by nothing in these letters so much as by the alleged fact that Carlyle had handed over the love-letters to Mr. Froude, to use at *his* discretion. Lady critics rightly pointed out that Carlyle had no right to do that—Mrs. Carlyle's consent was needed. "How anxious Carlyle was for notoriety," said other hostile critics. But from Professor

Norton's investigations it appears that these letters were *not* entrusted to Mr. Froude with a general permission to use his discretion in disposing of them. The love-letters were not burned by Carlyle only because he could not find them, and he left on record, in "the original manuscript from which the copy given to Mr. Froude was made," the following clear instructions regarding them. "My strict command now is, 'Burn them, if ever found. Let no third party read them; let no *printing* of them, or of any part of them, be ever thought of by those who love me!'" (Preface by Professor Norton to "Early Letters," vol. i. p. 11).

These are tolerably clear and explicit instructions, one would think; but in spite of these instructions Mr. Froude read the love-letters, and based much of his first volume on carelessly made extracts from them and erroneous accounts of their contents. Apart altogether from the carelessness and inaccuracies, it is clear that Carlyle's prohibition should have been held sacred, and that, even had the use Mr. Froude made of these letters been unobjectionable, it was wrong for him to use them at all. A trustee is only justified in using his discretion when the wishes of the person who placed the trust in his hands are unknown, unlawful, or quite impracticable, and even then "using his discretion" means, to any person of common sense, not doing whatever he likes, but finding out what is the right thing to do and doing it. At the time Mr. Froude made use of these letters, he plainly intimated that he had received permission to "use his discretion," and no one doubted his word. Nevertheless even then all reasonable people agreed he had not used his discretion rightly, although opinions naturally varied from fierce denunciations that he had "betrayed his trust," to charitable apologies that it was only an error of judgment or taste. But after Professor

Norton had made known the explicit instructions just quoted there ceased to be room for difference of opinion, and all can see that it was no longer poetical licence but the literal truth to say Mr. Froude "betrayed his trust."

These are hard words, and it is a pity such words have to be used. Even his enemies could not but be sorry for Mr. Froude on reading the clear proof that he had done this thing. There is good reason to believe that he was sorry for himself too—when the proof was published. No wonder he was anxious that the controversies raised over his Carlyle works should not be reopened.

This matter, however, is no longer a subject of controversy, but an indisputable and ascertained fact. Breach of trust, and breach of *such* a trust! And all to provide some readable paragraphs for a book which no mere bookseller's success could ever render other than a failure. From bewildered theologians Mr. Froude had early learned that Jesuitical "doctrine of devils" that the end justifies the means; and so, thinking no man would ever know it, and solacing his uneasy conscience with the delusion that his work would be of permanent value in elucidating the character of the noblest man of modern times, he apparently decided to act on this bad rule for once, and opened and read the love-letters which it was his duty not to read, and printed matter which it was his duty not to print. Never did Providence more swiftly and visibly refute that same "doctrine of devils," which has never in the long run profited any man. Mr. Froude's work defaced for a time the memory of Carlyle by multiplying delusions and mistakes, and the only thing likely to be permanently remembered is the breach of faith which it was hoped would never be known.

Once he decided to peep into the forbidden letters

Mr. Froude apparently read them hastily, and his usual carelessness, aggravated perhaps by his uneasy haste, made him fail to ascertain accurately what was in them; even as when some bank clerk, of hitherto irreproachable integrity, yields to the temptation to forge and defraud, his uneasy conscience often makes him blunder and fail, and he finds himself a bungler as well as a criminal. This is a charitable view of Mr. Froude's treatment of these letters. If he carefully read them all, then his account of them would prove him to have deliberately written many "things that were not." It seems more reasonable as well as more charitable to conclude he may have merely read the letters hastily, and noticed only those bits that could be made to fit plausibly into the story he had previously concluded to believe and tell.

Many private remarks of Mr. Froude have been credibly reported; but it has never been reported that he denied having noticed the prohibition against the use of these letters. Such a denial would not have been surprising, as he used his manuscript material very carelessly. But so far as can be discovered, no such denial was ever made.

However it happened that Mr. Froude came to use the love-letters, the fact that his account of them is not trustworthy is now also beyond dispute. Here is Professor Norton's report of the result, when, for satisfactory reasons stated at length in his Preface, he looked into these letters and compared them with Mr. Froude's account of them ("Early Letters," vol. ii., Appendix, p. 367):—

"The letters that passed between Carlyle and Miss Welsh from their first acquaintance in 1821 till their marriage in 1826 afford a view of their characters and their relations to each other, different both in particulars

and in general effect from that given by Mr. Froude. His narrative is a story 'founded on fact,' elaborated with the art of a practised romancer, in which assertion and inference, unsupported by evidence or contradictory to it, often take the place of correct statement. Even if the form of truth be preserved, a colour not its own is given to it by the imagination of the writer."

In the Appendix, which begins with these words, Mr. Norton gives details enough to convince any candid reader that he has stated the plain truth, and the critics agreed that he had proved his case. His statements may appear less surprising when compared with similar discoveries made in respect of other parts of Mr. Froude's writings. Let us take one as an example.

Mr. W. S. Lilly may be called a hostile witness, like Mr. Freeman and many others, whereas Mr. Norton is friendly, and writes more in sorrow than in anger. The severity of Mr. Norton's words is judicial, and needs no correction. Mr. Lilly, on the other hand, is provoked into the use of language which needs to be scrutinised before it is accepted. The matters of fact have to be sifted from the rhetoric. Readers may wish to hear one such witness. Here is what Mr. Lilly writes in the *Nineteenth Century* magazine for October 1895 regarding Mr. Froude:—

"He was incapable of critically investigating facts. Nay, he was incapable, congenitally incapable, I believe, even of correctly stating them. A less judicial mind probably never existed. . . . He is everywhere an advocate, and an utterly unscrupulous advocate. . . . It has happened to me, in the course of my own poor historical studies, to go over much of the ground trodden by Mr. Froude. And the conclusion to which I was long ago led is that it is never safe to accept any statement upon Mr. Froude's mere word. It is

however, only lately that my eyes were opened to the full extent of what is euphemistically called his inaccuracy. In the autumn of last year his book on "Erasmus" reached me. I chanced at the time to be myself deep in Erasmus, an author whom I have for years carefully and closely studied; and the folios of the Leyden edition of his works lay before me. I proceeded to compare Mr. Froude's 'abbreviated translations' with the original, and, I confess, the result transcended my expectations. I found, in well nigh every page, distortions, more or less gross—sometimes very gross—of Erasmus's meaning; things attributed to him directly contrary to what he really wrote; things of which the Latin presents no trace at all. . . . Certain it is that, like a well-known school of ecclesiastical historians, with whose temper he had much in common, however alien from their beliefs, he (Mr. Froude) preferred to have facts of his own making. Indeed he confesses as much. . . ."

The fact that Mr. Froude's accounts of Erasmus' letters are often erroneous is the important part of Mr. Lilly's evidence, and similar evidence is available as to many other parts of Mr. Froude's writings. We need not quite accept Mr. Lilly's explanations, however. Indeed the expression "utterly unscrupulous advocate" is, like Professor Freeman's declamations on the sins of Mr. Froude, somewhat irrelevant, and almost a misuse of language. A man is an "utterly unscrupulous advocate" when he consciously takes a side in a controversy, and has no hesitation in lying freely or taking advantage of any dishonest trick to secure a verdict for his side. That is the plain meaning of the words, and it cannot be said Mr. Froude was such a man, merely because he gave an erroneous account of what Erasmus wrote.

Mr. Lilly of course used these words in perfect good

faith. Mr. Froude's inaccuracies seemed to him too gross to be accidental, and as a *Quarterly Review* writer remarked in October 1895, in discussing Mr. Freeman's criticisms, "any one who has had occasion to study in original authorities the periods with which Froude dealt, and to compare his work with them, will make a good deal of allowance for his assailant. It is not easy to read his strange perversion of authorities, to witness the marvellous transformation which a statement often undergoes during its passage from the original writer to Froude's pages, and then to bring to bear on the mere literary merits of his work the mind of a calm and judicial critic." Of course it is not easy; but it is nevertheless necessary for a critic to be calm and judicial; and the calm and judicial view of this matter is that it is more likely that Mr. Froude misread, or, writing from memory, misquoted, than that he deliberately falsified Erasmus' letters. It also seems likely that he disregarded verbal accuracy, *intending* to be faithful to the meaning, although too often failing to act up to his intentions.

The result is the same, of course, however it was effected, and before going further it seems expedient to discuss Mr. Froude's character and methods. Evidence as to character is only sometimes relevant in judicial trials, but the most severely logical judge that ever sat on a bench would admit it in this case.

There are few newspapers that have a greater reputation for accuracy than the *Times*, and so the following sentences from the *Times*' obituary notice of Mr. Froude are perhaps admissible: "He was not a student, in the real sense of the term; he had neither the desire to probe his authorities to the bottom nor the patience to do so. Many anecdotes might be told to illustrate this. It is said that, at the time when Froude was busy on the part

of his history where Burleigh plays a leading part, he was invited to stay at Hatfield and make an examination of the masses of Cecil papers there preserved—at a time, it must be remembered, before the Historical Manuscripts Commission had published any of them; and that Froude went, and stayed one day. Lord Beaconsfield's executors did the same for him when he was writing his short Life of that statesman; he was satisfied with a glance at the papers on a Saturday-to-Monday visit. Scholars who read his brilliant sketch of Cæsar can see plainly that he had never properly read Cicero's letters, or not many of them. When he visited the West Indies, with a view of writing his 'English in the West Indies,' he preferred to sit in the shade reading Dante rather than to see for himself the institutions of Jamaica, about which, he told his host, he knew enough already. And, most noteworthy of all, though he visited Simancas, and stayed some time there, it is unquestionable that he learned comparatively little about the records there preserved."

The authorities for these anecdotes are not stated; but the anecdotes were not contradicted or even questioned, and must have been read by persons who could have contradicted them if untrue, and assuredly would have been well pleased to do so. Under the circumstances, one can scarcely hesitate to believe them.

Every man, it has been said, knows more about himself than any other person knows; and here is something Mr. Froude tells us of his own writings. In his charming and significant romance, his dream of "A Siding at a Railway Station"[1] ("Short Studies," vol. iv.), a crowd of railway passengers, representative men and women of all classes, were suddenly ushered into a "large barely furnished apartment, like the

[1] Probably suggested by Lucian's *Tyrant*, of which playwrights would call it an adaptation.

salle d'attente at the Northern Railway Station at Paris. A rail ran across, behind which we were all penned; opposite to us was the usual long table, on which were piled boxes, bags, and portmanteaus, and behind them stood a row of officials, in a plain uniform with gold bands round their caps, and the dry peremptory manner which passengers accustomed to deference so particularly dislike." These officials were there to examine not the luggage of passengers but their work. The chief official remarked, in reply to remonstrances, "Work is the condition of life. . . . There are but three ways of living: by working, by stealing, or by begging. . . . You have had your wages beforehand — ample wages, as you acknowledge yourselves. What have you to show?" Mr. Froude tells us the fate of his fellow-travellers in a manner more nearly approaching humour than anything else which he has written. Then he tells his own fate in candid words, which seem more worthy of attention and belief than anything written about him by friend or foe.

He was not a man to emulate Mr. Croker, "disputing with the Recording Angel as to the *dates* of his sins." Habitual self-satisfaction is a sure sign of a perfectly commonplace character. Tried by the highest standards, Mr. Froude seems a weak and worldly but amiable, learned and gifted man, not a commonplace or a bad man at all Those who think his confession proves him worse than themselves may find it profitable to remember that we are none of us infallible, and that there is no subject about which men are more likely to be mistaken than in their estimates of themselves. However serious Mr. Froude's inaccuracies, due chiefly to haste and nearly all involuntary, there must have been a great deal of veracity in the character of a man who described his own work as truly as he did in these sentences:—

"The bell rang again and my own name was called. There was no occasion to ask who I was. In every instance the identity of the person, his history, small or large, and all that he had said or done, was placed before the Court so clearly that there was no need for extorting a confession. There stood the catalogue inexorably impartial, the bad actions in a schedule painfully large, the few good actions veined with personal motives which spoilt the best of them. In the way of work there was nothing to be shown but certain books and other writings, and these were spread out to be tested. A fluid was poured on the pages, the effect of which was to obliterate entirely every untrue proposition, and to make every partially true proposition grow faint in proportion to the false element which entered into it. Alas! chapter after chapter vanished away, leaving the paper clean as if no compositor had ever laboured in setting type for it. Pale and illegible became the fine-sounding paragraphs on which I had secretly prided myself. A few passages, however, survived here and there at long intervals. They were those on which I had laboured least and had almost forgotten, or those, as I observed in one or two instances, which had been selected for special reprobation in the weekly journals. Something stood to my credit, and the worst charge of wilfully and intentionally setting down what I did not believe to be true was not alleged against me. Ignorance, prejudice, carelessness; sins of infirmity — culpable indeed, but not culpable in the last degree; the water in the ink, the commonplaces, the ineffectual sentiments; these, to my unspeakable comfort, I perceived were my heaviest crimes. Had I been accused of absolute worthlessness, I should have pleaded guilty in the state of humiliation to which I was reduced; but things were better than they might have been."

Mr. Froude was at work on his "Thomas Carlyle" at the time he published the interesting article just quoted (1879). In default of the magical fluid he writes of so prettily, earnest students of the facts of Carlyle's life who wish to know how much to believe of what Mr. Froude wrote must help themselves by ordinary human methods; and, first of all, let us consider the meaning of the few facts ascertainable about Mr. Froude himself.

There is a profound instinct of justice in Carlyle's own method of criticism, which Goethe admired, the method of weighing a man's utterances by his character as shown in his conduct. Flippant, foolish persons, for reasons sadly obvious, are apt to object to it, and many of those who defend Carlyle are too ready to ask us to forget his character and look at his writings exclusively. A man is the same man whether speaking, writing, or acting. The more we know of his conduct, the better we can understand what he writes. That is as true of Carlyle as of any other. That is the reason why we study *his* life. It is equally true of Mr. Froude; and, little as we can ascertain about him, nevertheless, as a man's true character is often shown in trifles, it may happen that even the little we can ascertain may fling unexpected light on the most important of all his writings, his account of Thomas Carlyle.

CHAPTER II

MR. FROUDE'S EARLY LIFE

THE explanation of the theological tendency of Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle" is not to be found in Carlyle's character, but in Mr. Froude's. Of Carlyle we may say what he himself said of John Sterling, in discussing Archdeacon Hare's book: "It was not as a ghastly phantasm, choked in Thirty-nine-article controversies, or miserable Semitic, anti-Semitic street-riots,—in scepticisms, agonised self-seekings, that this man appeared in life; nor as such, if the world still wishes to look at him, should you suffer the world's memory of him now to be. Once for all, it is unjust; emphatically untrue as an image of John Sterling: perhaps to few men that lived along with him could such an interpretation of their existence be more inapplicable."

On reading Mr. Froude's account of him, one would think Carlyle a would-be sect-founder, who was only prevented setting up a church of his own by the difficulty of finding disciples. Nothing could be more grotesquely absurd, when contrasted with the reality. Carlyle shared to the full extent the aversion of all sensible Englishmen to arguments that lead to no result but useless strife. When entangled against his will in such talk, he never concealed his opinions, unless courtesy compelled silence, but, as a rule, he soon changed the subject; and if the others present were wise they acquiesced. There is good reason to believe that when Mr. Froude bored Carlyle and found him impatient of the boredom, it was by talk

about doctrines, and the makers and vendors and users of these old-fashioned "Morrison's Pills." "He never voluntarily introduced such subjects," Mr. Froude admits.[1] Even in Carlyle's early years, Edward Irving found him averse to theology, and Emerson had a similar experience. Describing his walk and talk with Carlyle at Craigenputtock, Emerson says: "We sat down, and talked of the immortality of the soul. It was not Carlyle's fault that we talked on that topic. . . . But he was honest and true." Of what Carlyle then said Emerson reports only this, a very wise saying, although expressed in homely English, and not in any philosophic jargon. "Christ died on the tree: that built Dunscore Kirk yonder: that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence."[2]

The remark does not seem quite relevant to the subject, and perhaps was a first tentative effort on Carlyle's part to discuss something else than the "immortality of the soul."

In a letter Carlyle wrote to Emerson, however, there is a noteworthy passage relating to theology. Emerson was distressed because some of his own heterodox utterances were being quoted to the detriment of Carlyle, who was "nowise guilty." Carlyle genially and kindly reassured him in characteristic terms:—

"As to my share in it, grieve not for half an instant. Pantheism, Pottheism, Mydoxy, Thydoxy, are nothing at all to me; a weariness the whole jargon, which I avoid speaking of, decline listening to: *Live*, for God's sake, with what Faith thou couldst get; leave off *speaking* about Faith! Thou knowest it not. Be *silent*, do not speak.—As to you, my friend, you are even to go on, giving still harder shocks if need be; and should I come

[1] Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," 1834-1881, i. p. 40.

[2] "English Traits," chap. i.

into censure by means of you, there or here, think that I am proud of my company; that, as the boy Hazlitt said after hearing Coleridge, 'I will go with that man;' or, as our wild Burns has it,

> 'Wi' sic as he, where'er he be,
> May I be saved or damned!'"[1]

In short, the explanation of the tedious theology in Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle" could never be discovered in the facts of Carlyle's life, but it is at once obvious even on a cursory consideration of Mr. Froude's.

The father of Mr. Froude was a rector in the Church of England, an Archdeacon and a Justice of the Peace, with a moderate fortune of his own in land. He appeared to his sons a "continually busy, useful man of the world," antiquary, and artist. He never spoke about doctrine. "Dissent . . . was a crime," and that was the end of the matter. "The Church itself he regarded as part of the constitution; and the Prayer-book as an Act of Parliament." "My brothers and I," said Mr. Froude, "were excellently educated, and were sent to school and college," James Anthony Froude being sent to Westminster school for some years.[2]

Apparently he refers to his training at home as well as at school when he adds: "Our spiritual lessons did not go beyond the Catechism. We were told that our business in life was to work and to make an honourable position for ourselves."[3] Or, as Carlyle somewhat differently expresses the matter in "Past and Present,"

[1] "Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson," i. p. 190.

[2] Mozley's "Reminiscences," ii. p. 32.

[3] See the "Oxford Counter-Reformation," in "Short Studies," vol. iv., for this and the other quotations of Mr. Froude's words about himself when no other reference is given.

"What is it, if you pierce through his Cants, his oft-repeated Hearsays, what he calls his Worships and so forth,—what is it that the modern English soul does, in very truth, dread infinitely, and contemplate with entire despair? What *is* his Hell, after all these reputable, oft-repeated Hearsays, what is it? With hesitation, with astonishment, I pronounce it to be: The terror of 'Not succeeding'; of not making money, fame, or some other figure in the world,—chiefly of not making money! Is not that a somewhat singular Hell? . . . But indeed this Hell belongs naturally to the Gospel of Mammonism, which also has its corresponding Heaven. . . . Thank Heaven that there is even a Mammonism, *any*thing we are in earnest about! Idleness is worst. . . ."

"Carlyle was a growler," says the careless critic, and, indeed, so much is changed since he wrote that it is somewhat difficult nowadays to realise how new his teaching was, and how much his censures were justified. Here are the words of the Rev. T. Mozley, relating to the generation *then* living:—

"In those days everybody was to rise. Ambition, whether in the Church or in any secular service, was everywhere urged. The good books of the period, whether for the poor or for the better off, had their differences; but in the one thing they all agreed. You were to rise; you were to be a great man; your virtues were to be discovered, proclaimed, and rewarded, and you were to end your days in a blaze of triumph. Every boy whose quietness and steadiness marked him out for Holy Orders was reminded by many examples that he might one day be a dignitary, perhaps even a bishop. Church patronage was generally administered by and for aspirants; and the quantity of what profane people called jobbery was consequently enormous." . . . "'The very lowest downfall' with which idle boys were

threatened, by an esteemed teacher whom Mr. Mozley loved and revered, was 'that they would live to be country curates, and even then they would have to keep the accounts of a coal fund. . . .'

"The instant a path to success or an avenue to promotion showed itself, it was crowded. Greek scholarship, antiquities, and Iambics, every kind of criticism, became the occupation of many hundreds who looked to see what they could get by them."[1]

"Improve your Greek." A prelate in the Church of England used to relate that he had said to his candidates for ordination, "Improve your Greek, and do not waste your time in visiting the poor."[2]

Carlyle forcibly reminded the clergymen of every church that they had duties other than the study of Greek grammar, and that decency at all events was the least that could be expected of them. They feared him, it was wittily said at the time, as in the old days people feared the devil,—he "reminded them of their sins." His merits as a Church reformer have never yet been sufficiently acknowledged.

But reform in such matters is the slow product of several generations, and the "profane" still make disagreeable remarks. Whatever be the state of matters now, there is abundant evidence to show that Mr. Mozley accurately states what was considered seemly and proper during Mr. Froude's boyhood, and Mr. Froude's own words suffice to indicate that he and his brothers were probably educated like many other boys similarly situated, with a view to rising to the giddy eminence of a bishop, even as youthful Yankees used to be taught to aspire to be President.

There is another thing in his early education worth

[1] T. Mozley's "Reminiscences," ii. pp. 1, 2.
[2] Lord Houghton's "Monographs," pp. 272, 273.

notice. "Greek scholarship" has been mentioned as a means of promotion. Mr. Mozley tells an amusing anecdote on this subject. Speaking of Richard Hurrell Froude, the eldest brother of Mr. J. A. Froude, he says:—

"His acquaintance with country gentlemen had been special, perhaps fortunate. . . . It was therefore in perfect simplicity that, upon hearing one day the description of a new member in the Reformed Parliament, he exclaimed, 'Fancy a gentleman not knowing Greek!'"[1]

There is good reason to believe that Mr. J. A. Froude shared this prejudice. It explains his contempt for Carlyle's knowledge of Greek. Carlyle could read and enjoy Homer in the original, having paid his tax to contemporary stupor by learning the language, but he had no love for the minutiæ of Greek grammar, and failed in reverence for the particles *ge*, *men*, *de*. He even ventured to guess that these immortal particles, a sound knowledge of which was one road to an English bishopric,[2] were occasionally used by Homer without much discrimination, merely to eke out his syllables, for the sake of rhythm.

Like most other men, Carlyle was content to forget his Greek as he grew old, but unlike most others, he never concealed his opinion that our respect for so-called classical studies was an absurdity nowadays, however reasonable it may have been two or three centuries ago.

Mr. Froude could never understand such blasphemy, and late in life referred to Carlyle's ignorance of Greek in perplexed amazement. Such a prejudice, however absurd in itself, was natural and even profitable in a youth trained for a career at Oxford, and it was to Oxford University that Mr. Froude's brothers and himself were sent. "Oxford," said Emerson, "is a Greek factory, as Wilton mills weave carpet and Sheffield grinds steel."

[1] Mozley's "Reminiscences," i. pp. 227, 228.

[2] See Lord Houghton's "Monographs," p. 272.

CHAPTER III

AT OXFORD

IN 1848 Carlyle remarked to Emerson, then fresh from a visit to Oxford, that he preferred Cambridge to Oxford, but that he thought Oxford and Cambridge education "indurates the young men, as the Styx hardened Achilles, so that when they come forth of them they say, 'Now we are proof: we have gone through all the degrees, and are case-hardened against the veracities of the universe; nor man nor God can penetrate us.'"[1] In other words, they were ignorant, and no longer willing to learn. Education was supposed to be almost synonymous with expertness in Latin and Greek grammar, and the average young man's share of even that, in three or four years, was "three months' cram with a private tutor." "No dean or tutor ever volunteered to help our inexperience," says Mr. Froude, who adds, "There was much dissipation." The scheme of teaching for the higher class of men Mr. Froude thought "perhaps as good as it could be made," and they became very expert in the intricacies of Latin and Greek grammar. But when Archdeacon Froude's sons went there, what Carlyle called the "Condition of England" question was beginning to force itself so much on public attention that even Oxford students noticed it, and the more earnest young men there, contemplating with horror such atrocities as the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the Roman Catholic Relief Act, and the Reform Act, felt sorrow-

[1] *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. xxii. p. 90.

fully that the time was out of joint, and decided that they were fated to set it right.

There is something deliciously absurd in the gravity with which Mr. Froude tells this old story. To the end of his life, he retained much of his early delusion that the fate of England was somehow determined by the theological crotchets of a handful of polished but essentially ignorant young men. "P. P. clerk of this parish" was not more happily satisfied that the statesmen of Europe were guided by the gossip of himself and his cronies. Like the Utilitarians in "Sartor Resartus," they were so far in the rear as to fancy themselves in the van. Not many years had passed since Edward Gibbon, a man well qualified to judge, had remarked with special reference to Oxford, "The manners and opinions of our Universities must *follow at a distance* the progressive motion of the age."

"Follow" they must, however, since they cannot lead; and it may appear to some a wise provision of Nature that the benighted followers of the great leaders of thought fancy themselves leaders. Thereby they certainly follow all the more cheerfully. But the delusions of self-conceit are dangerous, however agreeable; and those who *stumble* forward in this way but *see* no farther forward than their noses are in danger of going far astray. So it is not surprising that the intellectual sheep met with adventures, and that to the *young rams* in particular it was a most exciting time.

For one thing it was more exhilarating to young men to plan the reformation of the universe than to attend to any work of their own. "Under the sad conditions of the modern world the Church of England was the rock of salvation. The Church, needing only to be purged of . . . Protestantism . . ." (a mere *trifle* that), was to "rise up, and claim and exercise her lawful authority

over all persons in all departments," chiefly through a few of these inspired young gentlemen, once they had provided themselves with fit millinery, and been sanctified by the laying-on of hands. "History was reconstructed." Mr. J. A. Froude and others looked up to Mr. (afterwards Cardinal) Newman "with the affection of pupils for an idolised master." "I asked once," says Mr. Froude, "whether the Church of England was able properly to create a saint. St. Charles (Charles I.) was immediately pointed out to me . . . the holy and blessed martyr St. Charles."

It must be confessed that such enlightenment was rather perplexing to a clear young head, and it quite explains conduct which surprised and pained Mr. Newman and his brother-in-law, the Rev. T. Mozley. Mr. Mozley says he was himself a Fellow at Oriel, and had "official relations to James Anthony Froude," and even resided "in the same staircase with him" during his "first year."

Commenting on what Mr. Froude wrote, this gentleman did what he could to elucidate Mr. Froude's biography.[1]

"Newman had parties, chiefly undergraduates," he reports, but Mr. J. A. Froude "was not going to be in leading-strings," and "seldom came." "All this was quite compatible with a high admiration of Newman's character, preaching, talking, and writing. . . . But if under this fascination, feeling it, and to some extent yielding to it, Anthony kept the party and the movement at arm's length. . . .

"The fact is that Anthony Froude kept aloof not only from Newman's friends, but from most Oriel society. Something had happened to him, and he was hardly

[1] Mozley's "Reminiscences," vol. ii. Chap. lxxiv., is headed "James Anthony Froude." The quotations following are made from it.

That Mr. Froude was not interfered with, therefore, merely means that no "questionable passages" were found in his "sermon-notes," and in short that he conformed to orthodoxy for a time. The Spanish Grand Inquisitor might say in perfect good faith that he never "interfered in the slightest degree" with those who by hypocrisy kept out of his clutches; but there is not room for much difference of opinion as to whether the Inquisitor was not one cause of their hypocrisy and the loss of self-respect which it involved.

Of course Mr. Mozley was too much of an English gentleman to emulate the Spanish Grand Inquisitor of real life. He wrote his "Reminiscences" with the naïve candour of a good old man, who had grown indifferent to temporal matters. His words may safely be taken as a sincere statement of his real thoughts; and it is clear from what he says that he recognised the *unwritten* law of his position, and was satisfied with decent outward conformity on Mr. Froude's part.

Truly, when one thinks of the facts of life, it seems a pity that the conformity Mr. Mozley required was not possible without any hypocrisy. It may be feared there must always be a great deal in the world *not* dreamed of in an undergraduate's philosophy; and the sooner it is recognised that hypocrisy is not the homage that vice pays to virtue but the trick of a rogue, and in itself a crime, so that a man is not the better but the worse for it, and the sooner it is recognised that no legends should be taught as truths, the sooner it will be possible for conscientious teachers of young men to eradicate the dangerous habit of idle speculation.

The mistake about hypocrisy is common, because many good and worthy people confuse hypocrisy with a very different thing, namely decency, the modesty that differentiates a man from an ape, and that is manifested

by an aversion to indecent exposure in speech or writing. "Assume a virtue if you have it not," means correctly, "Be ashamed of yourself," "Do what you *know* you ought to do." In any other sense this reasonable maxim is absurd.

Modesty, like all human virtues, must be taught, and can be taught by example better than by precept. But inculcating hypocrisy by mistake for modesty to men whose conscience tells them clearly that hypocrisy is wrong, makes them slow to learn modesty, and justifies a spirit of rebellion, with all its bad effects.

Young men cannot learn too soon that they are *not* born to explain the universe, nor yet to dream dreams, mistakes that all, who are not mere animals, are prone to make, when required to believe without evidence a cut-and-dry explanation of the universe and told to believe or be damned.

> "Hoky-Poky, here's a prize,
> Open your mouth and shut your eyes,"

is not a wise way of talking to men who are learning to think for themselves. To talk so is to confuse them, and hide from them the great truth that the object of all our study is to see things as they are, and understand as well as we can what we are born to *do*, and then do our work before "the night cometh."

Mr. Mozley and the Provost of Oriel College, looking over the undergraduate's sermon-notes for questionable passages, seem very absurd, and it is a pity they did not know better what kind of sermons were needed and what kind of notes were questionable. But their unspoken, perhaps unconscious purpose—to check idle speculation and try to make young men work instead of dreaming—was intrinsically right and wise. At least, so far as *that* was their purpose, it was wise.

However absurd may be the conduct of these latter-day Inquisitors, galvanising a dead religion, the blame for the partial hypocrisy enforced on Mr. Froude does not rest wholly on them. Doubtless he was influenced also by the advice and example of his father and eldest brother, for both of whom (Mr. Mozley tells us) he "had a great admiration"; but "while he admired he felt oppressed and repelled" from them, his better nature perhaps unconsciously asserting itself, and the hypocrisy so highly commended seeming every year more questionable.

Richard Hurrell Froude, his eldest brother, died young, but not before he had "left to us younger ones a characteristic instruction, that if ever we saw Newman and Keble disagree, we might think for ourselves." This advice insured leisure for study, and James, a gifted youth, was a successful student. He was made a Fellow of Exeter College in 1842, his age being then about twenty-four. Till then, it appears from Mr. Mozley's narrative that "whatsoe'er he thought, he acted right," *i.e.* was perfectly orthodox and conventional.

Emerson visited Oxford in 1848, while Mr. Froude was still there. He was the guest of Mr. A. H. Clough, and met Mr. Froude among others; and he has made some general remarks on Oxford fellowships which may elucidate this part of Mr. Froude's career.

"The number of fellowships at Oxford is 540, averaging £200 a year, with lodging and diet at the College. . . . As the number of undergraduates at Oxford is only about 1200 or 1300, and many of these are never competitors, the chance of a fellowship is very great. . . . If a young American, loving learning, and hindered by poverty, were offered a home, a table, the walks, and the library, in one of these academical palaces, and a thousand dollars a year as long as he chose to remain a bachelor, he would dance for joy." (Rather a doubtful statement,

methinks, but let it pass. What follows is matter of fact, fully corroborated, and not at all doubtful). "Yet these young men thus happily placed, and paid to read, are impatient of their few checks, and many of them preparing to resign their fellowships. They shuddered at the prospect of dying a Fellow, and they pointed out to me a paralytic old man, who was assisted into the hall."

CHAPTER IV

MR. FROUDE AMONG THE DOUBTING DONS

A FELLOWSHIP was usually a convenient stepping-stone to a living in the Church or to some educational employment, compatible with marriage, and that Mr. Froude should proceed next to take orders was almost a matter of course.

What honourably distinguished him was that he seems to have been more or less in earnest. Mr. Mozley tells us :—

"In a year or two, it reached Oriel College that Anthony was very much disturbing the serious members of his new college, by the boldness of his speculations, and by the pleasure he seemed to feel in destructive paradoxes. Very sad suspicions were entertained.

"After a time a reaction was reported. Anthony, it was said, wanted employment, and felt that he had no right to expect happiness in religion, if he was not working for it. Such a report reached Newman, and in such a form that he thought the time had come, and indeed that there was a providential opening for him to invite Anthony's assistance."

It was about then, *i.e.* about two years after Mr. Froude became a Fellow of Exeter, that with feelings of devout expectation he had hands laid on him, was duly ordained a deacon of the Church, and, piously expecting wonderful results from the mysterious ceremony, was surprised to find himself neither "better nor worse."[1]

[1] "Nemesis of Faith," pp. 182, 183.

He set to work without delay, under Mr. Newman's auspices, to contribute to the "Lives of the English Saints." Professor Goldwin Smith, Mr. Mozley and others are probably right in their conjecture that it was from Mr. Newman that Mr. Froude learned his style. Probably it was from him, too, that he acquired his slipshod methods of investigation. He soon found out that there was little more to be learned from Newman. Writing the "Lives of the English Saints" was not edifying work. "St. Patrick I found," says he, "once lighted a fire with icicles, changed a Welsh marauder into a wolf, and floated to Ireland upon an altar-stone. I thought it nonsense. . . . After a short experiment I had to retreat out of my occupation, and let the series go on without me."

Thereupon Mr. Froude began to be eyed with suspicions sadder than ever, and in serious truth he seemed not unlikely then to drop into the melancholy company of the doubting dons. They were those whose best qualities were apt to be negative. They were not coarse enough to be quite heedless of spiritual truth; not stupid enough to be able to believe old creeds; and not dishonest enough to say with tongue in cheek, "The people wish to be humbugged—let them," which from time immemorial has been the secret watchword of ecclesiastical "statesmen" in all countries and creeds. Yet withal, learned, gifted, and brave gentlemen as many doubting dons were, they were tied fast as by innumerable threads, like Gulliver in Lilliput, and to strengthen every other little conventional bond there was often the question of ways and means.

They could not work except at tuition; whereby few of them could hope to earn even a moderate livelihood, if they avowed their heterodoxy. Pecuniary success in a literary life is like success in gambling,

uncertain and unsatisfactory, and also not open to more than a few. To beg they were ashamed, and the habits of Oxford and Cambridge unfitted them to struggle with poverty. The best of the doubting dons must often have felt, in despair,—

> "All the arts I have skill in,
> Divine and humane;
> Yet all's not worth a shilling;
> Alas! poor scholar, whither wilt thou go?"

Such was the position in which some of the brightest intellects in England were doomed to remain by our stupid conservatism in spiritual matters,—a conservatism calling itself orthodox, and esteemed highly respectable, but really low, gross, brutal, and materialistic.

These unhappy victims of modern superstition deserve more sympathy than they are ever likely to receive. One has to remember that they must often have been quite sincere at the outset, but outgrew their "creeds outworn," in which, however, they had to pretend to abide, under the penalty of poverty and ridicule. Our beautiful occidental conservatism attempted and still attempts to treat men's minds in the same way as the Chinese deal with ladies' feet.

The misery of the unhappy gentlemen so treated was perhaps the least of the many evil results of this system, but their misery was real and terrible enough. Let Mrs. Butler describe to us the impression made by our doubting dons on a bright and lively female mind:—

"What struck me more than all was the surprising want of courage in expressing, even if it were felt, any opinion differing from that of the celibate mass around. . . .

"In social intercourse, caution and timidity prevailed. A certain scepticism on many of the gravest questions

had followed as a reaction on the era of Tractarianism, and it appeared to be very difficult for a man simply to assert his belief in anything. In some men this timidity, or self-imposed reticence, as to expressing any positive belief, or even asserting a simple fact, seemed to take the form of mental disease. If on a splendid summer morning one remarked, 'It is a fine day,' the man addressed would hesitate to endorse the fact,—not lest his doing so should entail consequences, but simply from a habit of holding everything in suspense. . . ."[1]

They must have envied those who were orthodox without an effort, it may be said. Truly, yes; they must often have envied the cats and the sparrows too. But they were not likely to be without an occasional consoling thought in their confused darkness and loneliness, a thought that, whatever bigots and fanatics and hypocrites and foolish human animals might say, they did well to doubt, and that there was no sin on their part except the false pretence of belief. Like the poet Gray, they "never spoke out"; and yet, as they must have dimly felt,—

> "The light that led astray
> Was light from Heaven."

It was only the strength to follow it that failed them.

In any honest mind the sin of hiding disbelief in dogmas, which one is supposed to believe, is punished so terribly that human nature cannot always continue to suffer the agony, and men follow gladly the spiritual champion who bursts the bonds. This was the greatest service that Carlyle rendered to Europe and America. He liberated the thought of the Western world, and showed the way out of Houndsditch, not by debating

[1] "Recollections of George Butler," by J. E. Butler, his wife, pp. 94, 95.

about it, but by quietly taking it. Even Gibbon veiled his thoughts in sneers, and Goethe spoke in parables. Voltaire was a violent partisan against Christianity, and exaggerated the evils of it as absurdly as others exaggerated its good qualities. Carlyle was the first great European thinker who viewed Christianity in all its shapes, and Mahomedanism, and Confucianism, and every variety of paganism, with equal candour, impartiality, and intelligence.

He was no more a specialist on religion than Shakespeare was. He saw and taught us to see the world as it is. But nothing human was foreign or strange to him, and in the light of his wonderful intellect the true relation of religion to human progress is visible. Wonder and worship and reverence elevate men above the animals, and make them capable of righteousness, while the tawdry paraphernalia of superstition seem as ridiculous as the Kaiser Charles V. himself on Corpus Christi Day at the famous Diet, when he walked, "nearly roasted in the sun, in heavy purple-velvet cloak, with a big wax candle, very superfluous, guttering and blubbering in the right hand of him, along the streets of Augsberg." [1]

That Mr. Froude was able to deliver himself from the dismal company of the doubting dons was due, as he gratefully acknowledged, to the fact that he was able to turn to Carlyle when Newman failed him. Light had come into the world again, and not Mr. Froude only, but most of the intelligent men in Europe were beginning to listen in those years to the strange teaching of Thomas Carlyle.

"Newman grew up," wrote Mr. Froude in 1848, "in Oxford, in lectures, and college chapels, and school divinity; Mr. Carlyle in the Scotch Highlands, and the poetry of Goethe. I shall not in this place attempt to

[1] Carlyle's "Frederick," book iii. ch. v.

acknowledge all I owe to this very great man; but, about three years before Newman's secession, chance threw in my way the 'History of the French Revolution.' I shall but caricature my feelings if I attempt to express them; and, therefore, I will only say that for the first time it was brought home to me that two men may be as sincere, as earnest, as faithful, as uncompromising, and yet hold opinions far asunder as the poles. I have before said that I think the moment of this conviction is the most perilous crisis of our lives; for myself, it threw me at once on my own responsibility, and obliged me to look for myself at what men said, instead of simply accepting all because they said it. I began to look about me, to listen to what had to be said on many sides of the question, and try, as far as I could, to give it all fair hearing."

These last words are quoted from the "Nemesis of Faith," and are not and do not purport to be an exact account of Mr. Froude's own mental development. He involuntarily continued to follow his elder brother's advice, and postponed thinking for himself. He has told us that he read the "French Revolution," and wondered at it like his contemporaries, but did not know what to make of it till John Sterling, whom he met at Falmouth in the winter of 1841–42, explained it to him, and told him of the greatness of Carlyle.[1]

He continued to drift. It was two years after 1842 that he took orders, and it was only *after* doing so, let us charitably hope, that he succeeded in triumphing over all the Oxford impediments to intellectual growth, and began to "read hard in modern history and literature." . . "By Carlyle," says he, writing of himself, "I was led to Goethe. I discovered Lessing for myself, and then Neander and Schleiermacher. The 'Vestiges of the

[1] Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," 1834–1881, i. p. 229.

Natural History of Creation,' which came out about that time. introduced modern science to us under an unexpected aspect, and opened new avenues of thought."

The last-named book about vestiges is now as extinct as an old newspaper, more so if possible, but in 1845 it was much talked of; and in that year Mrs. Carlyle, then absent on a visit at Liverpool, mentioned in a letter to her husband "these eternal Vestiges of Creation," and the happy name she had there heard given to the book, "animated mud."

"Dull book (quasi-atheistic), much talked of then," is Carlyle's footnote. That to Mr. Froude it "opened new avenues of thought" is significant. He was never able to grasp fully the positive side of Carlyle's teaching, but to him, as to most other men of first-class ability who had looked into the matter, it had become as difficult to believe in Christianity as to believe in Jupiter.

CHAPTER V

AT THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

MR. FROUDE had now outgrown orthodoxy, and a crisis was inevitable. The nature of the crisis cannot be better illustrated than by a conversation which took place in Carlyle's Chelsea house on the evening of Tuesday, March 25, 1857. The visitor, who recorded it at the time, was Mr. Knighton, then home from India and Ceylon.

It is a conversation that may tax severely the tolerance of some readers, but those who can endure the strain will not regret their patience, for this casual talk with Carlyle helps much to elucidate the crisis of Mr. Froude's life.

Tolerance is the art of enduring each other's intolerance, and no one better deserves the reader's indulgence than Carlyle, for, as Sir Henry Taylor assures us, "An unlimited freedom of speech is permitted to his friends, and I remember when some wild sentiments escaped him long ago, telling him that he was an excellent man in all the relations of life, but that he did not know the difference between right and wrong. And if such casualties of conversation were to be accepted as an exposition of his moral mind, any one might suppose that these luminous shafts of his came out of the blackness of darkness." To all which, apparently, Carlyle listened with imperturbable good humour.

It must be remembered that we are, so to speak, eavesdropping. The words are not addressed to us

but to Mr. Knighton, to whom they are not offensive but agreeable. Nay, we do not hear Carlyle's words, we only see what Mr. Knighton could recollect of them. We are eavesdropping under peculiar difficulties.

The talk turned on Indian topics and on Carlyle's old acquaintance, Brigadier Mackenzie, who had been in trouble in India. In vindicating Mackenzie, which an unpublished letter shows he had taken pains to do by every method likely to be effectual as well as in conversation, Carlyle concluded: "It is quite true, as the papers state, that he is a devout Christian; but how that should be to any man's discredit in a Christian country is not easily explained, except in this way—that unbelief, and cant, and humbug, and insincerity are gaining the day."

Mr. Knighton saw his opportunity, and asked,—

"Is belief—such as belief was before geological and astronomical discoveries—possible nowadays?"

Carlyle.—"Only possible to those who are ignorant of such discoveries; but when existing, it is a beautiful thing."

Knighton.—"And what is the position of the clergy in this matter?"

Carlyle.—"The position of the clergy is one of ignominy and deep degradation. The spectacle of a body of enlightened men solemnly, and in the face of God and man, professing their steadfast faith and belief in that which they know they do not steadfastly believe in, is enough to make any thinking man sick at heart. What enlightened man can conscientiously in these days tie up his reason by formulas and articles drawn up centuries ago, and say, 'I believe,' whilst the inner soul of him all the time is exclaiming, 'I do not believe—it is a lie?'"

Knighton.—"Some men, like Dr. Newman, for instance, first persuade themselves that there is an in-

fallible church that cannot err, and then, taking refuge therein, are troubled no further about the matter—accepting all its *dicta* as Heaven-descended truths, whatever their reason may whisper about the matter."

Carlyle.—"And what is that but moral emasculation?—one of the most lamentable religious phases of our times. Even with respect to the clergy of the English Church, they doubtless have persuaded themselves, in most instances, that they did believe before they made their declaration to that effect. For the time being they do not believe, but—believe that they believe. There is little hope for a church existing under such circumstances. No, no; things cannot go on long in this way. Swift destruction is impending, not on the Church only—mother of dead dogs."[1]

"They believe that they believe," *i.e.* they cozen themselves into a belief in Christian legends, without having any real conviction, based on clear knowledge and insight, that the legends are true. How widely spread this pernicious state of mind is can be seen from one thing—the importance attached in all sects to orthodoxy. "To believe" this or that set of doctrines is a great merit, covering more sins than charity ever did. These people seem to fancy, some of them even say, that belief is an act of the will. It is not so at all. A man can decide to be candid or not. But if he is truly candid, he can believe only "as the spirit moves him," if one may use the words of an old dialect, through which shines clearly an eternal truth. What a candid man will believe he cannot himself determine. He wills to try to discover the truth. If a man *wills* to believe anything contrary to the weight of the evidence, he ceases to be candid.

To believe as he is really convinced may seem a small

[1] *Contemporary Review*, June 1881.

merit in any man; but in times of spiritual putrescence, when the leading men in church and state speak without a blush of the "fundamental fictions" of society, and consider him a fool who does not believe in making fictions the foundation of anything, the man who is willing to believe only as he is really convinced is apt to find himself in danger of being made a martyr for his opinions. Many indirect penalties are inflicted on candour, and great are the rewards of hypocrisy. Moreover, though Smithfield fires are quenched long ago, there are men who would have faced the fires of Smithfield, yet who shrink now from a little social ostracism, and acquiesce in fictions rather than offend against "good form."

When Carlyle called the "Church" a "mother of dead dogs," he was not using the language of vulgar abuse, but speaking with scientific accuracy. The meaning of his words, as may be gathered from his writings, is that the Church *tended* to make men merely affect belief without real conviction, and that thereby it enfeebled them in heart and mind. Men who for any reason persuade themselves that they believe a creed which they know or even suspect they do not quite believe, become incapable of any real earnest belief. Their souls are dead. Their "belief" is analogous to an actor's "belief" that he is the "Prince of Denmark," when he struts as Hamlet for a few hours on the theatrical stage. Such clergymen may be excellent actors in chapel, church, or cathedral. They may terrify, comfort, and amuse "Feeble-minds" of both sexes for a time, with much temporary profit to the actors. But, as surely as death is followed by putrefaction, they sink into intellectual torpor, and are powerless to move the minds and hearts of earnest men, who contemptuously consider them artists paid to amuse the women, as pantomime

clowns amuse the children. Far from saving the souls of others, they are impotent to save their own. In short, they are like dead dogs, drifting helplessly down a stream in which they have been drowned. This was what Carlyle meant when he named the Church a "mother of dead dogs."

It must, however, be remembered that Carlyle spoke thus in private conversation and in reply to questions. What he said applied at that time to a minority only, namely, to those who could not really believe the creeds they professed. It would have applied to Mr. Froude, if he had persisted in a theological career, and that is the reason why such talk is here quoted.

In substance, Mr. Knighton's report is doubtless correct. But if there had been a shorthand reporter present it is likely that the fierce denunciation would have been found qualified and expressly limited to those for whom it was intended. There were many shades of meaning in Carlyle's talk, apt to escape those who reported it from memory.

Even from Mr. Knighton's report it appears that Carlyle thought the Church of England better than the Church of Rome, and it is almost equally certain that he was not speaking generally of the Church as it *was*, but of the Church as it *tended to become*, a distinction the importance of which even dismal science doctors are at last, with an effort, beginning to discover. Carlyle's sentiments regarding the Church of England were often stated, and perhaps by no reporter of his talk more accurately than by Sir M. E. Grant Duff.

The time was 1862. He was explaining how he had visited the dog show. He had been out riding, and had met the Bishop of Oxford. They rode together and talked, and Carlyle's account is thus reported:—

"'For the first one hundred yards the Bishop had

talked of the "Essays and Reviews" judgment, had said there would be an appeal, and that these gentlemen would have to leave their livings—then he told me that he was going to the dog show, and I thought I should never have such an opportunity again, so I went with him, and we stayed some two hours. He is a delightful companion, a most active ardent creature. I know nobody who would have succeeded better in whatever he was set to do.' Carlyle spoke of the 'Essays and Reviews' case, and said it was sad to see a great institution like the Church of England, to which he had never belonged and to which he had many objections, but which he nevertheless thought the best thing of the kind in the world, falling to pieces in this manner, and going the way of all the earth. He had little good to say either of the Scotch Presbyterian or the Roman Catholic Church. . . ."

Thus it is clear that Carlyle was alive to the actual good qualities of the existing Church. His clear foresight of its tendencies did not prevent him recognising the good qualities of men then in it. In short, he did not judge religious or any other men by their creed or profession. He looked through all such accidents into the actual man or woman he had to deal with, and loved a good man when he saw one, whatever his creed. Witness his long friendships with Thomas Erskine and many others, as well as Bishop Wilberforce.

For sincere honest believers in any creed who practised and lived their religion, Carlyle had nothing but kindly toleration and sympathy. To them as to him the moral law was the "root of the matter," and practical righteousness the essence of religion. They meant what they said, and tried to do what they thought right. Therefore, whatever their ignorance or errors of judgment, they were faithful and honest at heart.

For the "liberal school of clergy," on the other hand,

for those to whom religion was a mere matter of semi-theatrical performances or stump oratory, and hollow pretence of adherence to doctrines they doubted or wholly disbelieved, he had and could have no respect, but only pity and reprobation. Mr. Froude could never understand this, intelligible as it must be to all earnest men. Mr. Froude's guesses, especially in the freedom of private correspondence, are very amusing. His favourite guess was that Carlyle was much of a Calvinist! No shot could have been wider of the mark. Nearly all that Carlyle had in common with earnest Calvinists he had in common with sincere straightforward men of every class and creed. "Give me," said he in conversation to Mr. Knighton, "a God-fearing man and a God-believing man, and that man will understand me."

The reason why Mr. Froude never did understand him is to be found in Mr. Froude's own character, which was strikingly illustrated by the fact that he attempted for several years, not less than four apparently, to combine a formal adherence to orthodoxy with deliberate doubt or disbelief.

He was saved from persisting in this course by many things, one of which was his incapacity for the self-imposed reticence which amused Mrs. Butler. He had in effect reached the last parting of the ways when he retreated out of the occupation Newman set him.

No living thing can grow backwards. The tree can never be a sapling again or the man a boy. It was equally impossible for Mr. Froude to become a believer in any orthodox form of Christianity. He still hesitated long between the straightforward road and the more alluring path, and there never was a Mr. Facing-both-ways who took the right road at last with greater reluctance.

He was a deacon of the Church, pledged to believe

articles which he saw to be absurd. Was he to become (if Carlyle's homely metaphor may be used again) another of the dead dogs rotting and lazily floating down that old Fleet ditch? Or was he to avow his convictions, whatever the consequences, and so begin at last to act and speak like a true man?

It was a hard choice, and he tried to avoid it by a compromise. His plan was to keep his fellowship, *and* write according to his convictions.

The years 1847 to 1849 were the most important of his life, and his conduct then influenced all the rest of it. We cannot cast the anchor in the stream of life.

CHAPTER VI

MR. FROUDE'S EXODUS FROM HOUNDSDITCH

MR. FROUDE'S plan was not so absurd as it seems. In confidential talk the doubting dons spoke of the matters they did not believe as non-essential, or in obscure hints indicated that they tried to think them so. If the world was not made quite on the plan of the Thirty-nine Articles, still one might hope that these invaluable propositions were not so *very* far wrong.

When an outspoken intelligent young man joined these sceptics and spoke openly of the discrepancies between the old creed and the new discoveries in science and history, the only real defence of the doubting dons was at once tried as by a touchstone. If the incredible items—miracles, *e.g.*, to name only one—were non-essential, there could be no harm in saying so. It is no wonder that the "serious members" of Exeter College were "disturbed." Mr. Froude, for his part, gradually growing wearied of hypocrisy, and not content with the prospect of dying a Fellow, decided to throw off the mask and speak out.

There was revolution "in the air" in 1847 and 1848, and his studies in modern literature must have made Mr. Froude more open to outside influences than the average don. Excitement is apt to be contagious, and the political events then coming or come may have quickened Mr. Froude's action.

Be that as it may, his first book was published in

1847. It was so curiously like an autobiography in some parts that it must be discussed separately.

In 1848 he published another, the "Nemesis of Faith," which had a certain success at the time, reaching a second edition in 1849. It is interesting now only as evidence of his own history, and might be described as an account of "The sorrows of a young gentleman, who had to give up a good living in the Church of England, because he did not believe its doctrines, and was too honest to preach what he did not believe." The book frankly explains how historical Christianity has become as incredible as any other mythology, and contains much long-winded sentimentality. The hero of it had no moral earnestness, and in sheer wanton idleness began making love to another man's wife and died opportunely. That he deserved to be *kicked* out of life, or at least *into* a more healthy occupation, never really occurred to himself or to his sentimental creator. Carlyle was named and highly praised in the book, but privately denounced it in strong terms.

It is specially noteworthy that Mr. Froude did not venture to seek Carlyle's acquaintance while he was writing in this way. Long before then, in the winter of 1841–42, John Sterling could have given him a letter of introduction if he had wished it. Any reluctance Carlyle felt to let Mr. Froude be introduced to him, Mr. Froude himself attributes to these early writings, and he must have felt that the compromise he was aiming at was one that Carlyle could never approve. It was not till 1849, when he had been forced to give it up, that he sought to speak with Carlyle face to face.

If however he must be condemned, it is only because he must be tried by a high heroic standard. Different as his book is from Goethe's "Sorrows of Werter," differing from it, in fact, as Mr. Froude differs from

Goethe, still it was due to a similar crisis in his mind. "In these sick days," says Carlyle in "Sartor Resartus," "when the Born of Heaven first descries himself (about the age of twenty) in a world such as ours, richer than usual in two things, in Truths grown obsolete, and Trades grown obsolete,—what can the fool think but that it is all a Den of Lies, wherein whoso will not speak Lies and act Lies, must stand idle and despair? Whereby it happens that, for your nobler minds, the publishing of some such Work of Art (as the 'Sorrows of Werter'), in one or the other dialect, becomes almost a necessity. For what is it properly but an Altercation with the Devil, before you begin honestly Fighting him? . . . Happier is he who, like our Clothes-Philosopher, can write such matter, since it must be written, on the insensible Earth, with his shoe-soles only; and also survive the writing thereof!"

In justice to Mr. Froude we must not forget his situation as deacon in the Church and a Fellow of Exeter College. "Forty years ago," wrote he in 1885, "the law said to a clergyman, 'You shall teach what the formulas prescribe, whether you believe it or not, and you shall stay at your post, even though you know that you disbelieve it; for you shall enter no other profession; you shall teach this, or you shall starve.' That is gone, and much else is gone."

There is some unconscious self-revelation here, when we study the dates. These words show, if not how Mr. Froude was situated, at least how he thought he was situated, nearly "forty years" before 1885. Even accepting his version of the state of the law, it is curiously characteristic of him that he did not reflect that the clergyman's disagreeable position was *partly* due to his *own fault;* because he had agreed, in return for a salary regularly paid, to teach what the formulas prescribed,

when he became a clergyman, and voluntarily made himself liable to the penalties mentioned.

Carlyle blamed John Sterling for trying to find a career in the Church, but Sterling was sincere throughout and soon abandoned the attempt. Mr. Froude persevered much longer, but never dreamed of blaming himself.

One or two things must now be mentioned which are liable to misconstruction. The movement of a stone flung from the hand is the product of *all* the different forces acting upon it, and not of any *one* of them alone. Even so, the line of action a man takes is determined by many influences, including some of which he is himself unconscious.

On 20th August 1849, not long after Mr. Froude quitted Oxford, Miss Jewsbury, writing of him to Mrs. Carlyle, said he was "engaged to be married to a very handsome woman of good family and good fortune."[1] Now, he could not hold his fellowship and wed. Moreover, he had been appointed to be headmaster of the High School at Hobart Town, Tasmania, and he could not hold his fellowship and proceed there.

The outcry against the books he had published must have shown to his eminently practical mind that he could not hope for promotion in the Church. There were changes in progress, but not of a kind likely to serve him. It would have been as difficult for him to get a living of any sort as for Sydney Smith to get a bishopric. The only bait orthodoxy had to offer him, therefore, was a fellowship, conditional upon celibacy, and requiring a certain reticence inconsistent with his success in literature. The sale of his "Nemesis of Faith" must have made him hopeful of pecuniary success as a man of letters, and his fellowship exposed him, while he held it, to insults which were the harder to bear because he must have felt them

[1] "Letters of G. E. Jewsbury to J. W. Carlyle," p. 292.

to be partly just. The discovery of this last penalty of candour, liability to personal insult, seems from a study of the dates to have been the circumstance which ended his hesitation.

But the dates may be misleading; and how far such considerations influenced him no man is ever likely to know, even if all his private letters are published; and at present, certainly, it is impossible to do more than guess. Whether or not he meant to become a martyr "on the cheap," whether he was in any sense a martyr at all, there is no doubt that he felt himself one, and was sublimely conscious of the utmost magnanimity.

Emerson's observant remarks on the sentiments of the Oxford Fellows in 1848 perhaps elucidate the matter as well as need be; but it was of a very different kind of talk that Mr. Froude was thinking when he informed us that Emerson's "conversation, perhaps unknown to himself, had an influence on my after life."[1] "I saw," said Emerson, "several faithful, high-minded young men, some of them in a mood of making sacrifices for peace of mind—a topic, of course, on which I had no counsel to offer." But summing up his chapter on English religion about seven years afterwards, Emerson wrote some pregnant sentences which help us to guess what his conversation may have been:—

"The English Church, undermined by German criticism, had nothing left but tradition, and was led logically back to Romanism. But that was an element which only hot heads could breathe; in view of the educated class, generally, it was not a fact to front the sun; and the alienation of such men from the Church became complete.

"Nature, to be sure, had her remedy. Religious persons are driven out of the Established Church into

[1] Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," 1834-1881, i. p. 415.

sects, which instantly rise to credit, and hold the Establishment in check. Nature has sharper remedies also. The English, abhorring change in all things, abhorring it most in matters of religion, cling to the last rag of form, and are dreadfully given to cant. . . . The English and the Americans cant beyond all other nations. . . ."

"The Church at this moment is much to be pitied. She has nothing left but possession. If a bishop meets an intelligent gentleman, and reads fatal interrogations in his eyes, he has no resource but to take wine with him. . . ." "There is nothing left but to quit a church which is no longer one."

"But the religion of England—is it the Established Church? no; is it the sects? no. . . . Where dwells the religion? Tell me first where dwells electricity, or motion, or thought. . . . They do not dwell or stay at all. . . . If religion be the doing of all good, and for its sake the suffering of all evil, that Divine secret has existed in England from the days of Alfred. . . ."[1]

Something of all this, we can never ascertain how much, Mr. Clough and Mr. Froude may have heard Emerson say. Let us hope there was a minimum of it when he "breakfasted in Common Room" at Oriel.

Mr. A. H. Clough did more for Mr. Froude than introduce him to Emerson. He proved a true friend when matters reached a crisis. In 1849, the year following Emerson's visit, Mr. Froude's books were being burned in the quadrangle of Exeter College, and then, whatever longing, lingering looks he cast behind at the butteries and benefices of Oxford, he quitted it along with Mr. Clough, and both resigned their fellowships. Then it was that Clough, who had pointed out Carlyle to Mr. Froude at a lecture Emerson gave in London,

[1] "English Traits," chaps. xii. and xiii.

apparently persuaded Carlyle to see him, though it was Mr. Spedding who actually introduced him.

Mr. Clough's best work was his excellent translation of Plutarch. He was one of the many gifted men who, by what we call accident, remain more or less unknown, and even, being of healthy mind, perhaps find obscurity no grievance, aware that in the lapse of centuries fame and obscurity are at last the same.

> "'Tis not more certain all must die,
> Than that all must *forgotten* lie."

As Carlyle's friend and Emerson's, as well as Plutarch's best English translator, Clough is a man still interesting. But for him, it is not unlikely that Mr. Froude's exit from Oxford would have been less seemly than it was. Mr. Espinasse, who saw him about the time he and Froude left Oxford together, long afterwards "remembered well" Clough's "fresh-coloured face, boyish-looking," yet thoughtful, "anxious," and his "rather stalwart Lancashire figure," "encased in a loosely-buttoned black frock coat, and altogether with an aspect partly that of a cleric, partly of an athlete."[1] He was "very stingy of his speech," complained Carlyle, to the surprise of "Bozzy" Espinasse, but the surprise was needless. Carlyle excelled in listening as much as in speaking, a fact which many witnesses, Mr. Espinasse himself among them, might be quoted to prove. Real knowledge or sincere thought was sure of patient attention from Carlyle, though it was never safe to chatter nonsense in his hearing. That he liked the man Clough better than the poet, and would have gladly heard him speak more, is Clough's best epitaph.

No similar complaint was ever heard regarding the new acquaintance whom Clough persuaded him to see. Mr. Froude was then over thirty-one years of age, tall

[1] "Literary Recollections," p. 363.

and upright, with coal-black eyes and hair.[1] He had handsome features and a winning smile, with affection but little humour in it. He was intelligent, deferential, consciously earnest, polished in manners, studious to please, and quick as a woman to see how to please.

Writing of himself and of Mr. Clough, Mr. Froude thus tells the story of his first visit to Carlyle in the summer of 1849:—

"We had felt, both of us, that, thinking as we did" (to say nothing of the treatment I had received), "we were out of place in an Article-signing University, and we had resigned our Fellowships. Of Clough Carlyle had formed the very highest opinion. . . . His pure beautiful character, his genial humour, his perfect truthfulness, alike of heart and intellect—an integrity which had led him to sacrifice a distinguished position and brilliant prospects, and had brought him to London to gather a living as he could from under the hoofs of the horses in the streets" (not as a crossing-sweeper, but as Principal of University Hall, Mr. Espinasse tells us),—"these together had recommended Clough to Carlyle as a diamond sifted out of the general rubbish-heap. Of me, with good reason, he was inclined to think far less favourably. I had written something, not wisely, in which heterodoxy was flavoured with the sentimentalism which he so intensely detested. He had said of me that I ought to burn my own smoke, and not trouble other people's nostrils with it. Nevertheless, he was willing to see what I was like. James Spedding took me down to Cheyne Row one evening in the middle of June. We found him sitting after dinner, with his pipe, in the small flagged court between the house and the garden. He was studying without much satisfaction the Life of St.

[1] Slight conflict of evidence on this last point. I follow Mr. Skelton as the best witness.

Patrick by Jocelyn of Ferns in the *Acta Sanctorum*. He was trying to form a notion of what Ireland had been like before Danes or Saxons had meddled with it, when it was said to have been the chosen home of learning and piety, and had sent out missionaries to convert Northern Europe. His author was not assisting him. The life of St. Patrick as given by Jocelyn is as much a biography of a real man as the story of Jack the Giant-killer. When we arrived Carlyle had just been reading how an Irish marauder had stolen a goat and eaten it, and the saint had convicted him by making the goat bleat in his stomach. He spoke of it with rough disgust; and then we talked of Ireland generally, of which I had some local knowledge" (and which Carlyle was about to visit).

Mr. Froude's local knowledge of Ireland was of little or no service to Carlyle, who was then in close communication with many others, and in particular with his friend Duffy, the "young Ireland" hero, in whose company he travelled through Ireland that summer. Carlyle did not, however, confine his intercourse to one party, though "young Ireland" had most of his sympathy. He saw men and women of all parties, and his pregnant remarks upon the causes of Irish misery have been painfully illustrated and justified by the subsequent history of Ireland.

In 1849, as Duffy remarks, Carlyle's "life had grown tranquil; he had outlived his early struggles to obtain a footing in life and a hearing from the world; he had written the 'French Revolution' and 'Cromwell,' and his place in literature was no longer in doubt. . . . One of the show places which distinguished foreigners were sure to visit in London was the narrow house in a dingy little street off the Thames, where the Philosopher of Chelsea resided."

For several years before this time Carlyle might have been a London "Society Lion," and to the surprise of

all, including one of his *best* biographers, he showed not the slightest inclination to be lionised. This piqued the curiosity of "Society" still more, and in seeking acquaintance with Carlyle, Mr. Froude, then tutor in a Manchester family, it is said, and known if at all only to his discredit, was merely one of a crowd. That his docility and perseverance enabled him after many years to emerge from the crowd and to become at last a friend of Carlyle, are surely facts creditable to him, however temporarily unfortunate for Carlyle's reputation his literary performances have been.

In 1849 the acquaintance opened brightly, under the auspices of Clough and Spedding, and a pen-portrait of Carlyle, as he then appeared, is perhaps the most memorable bit of writing Mr. Froude ever achieved.

CHAPTER VII

THOMAS CARLYLE IN 1849

MR. FROUDE'S pen-portrait of Carlyle in 1849 is in striking contrast to the disgraceful etching which disfigures his book. On comparing the etching with the photograph from which it was taken, it can be seen that the lady was apparently right who said, "Some third-rate artist has been employed to plane off the front of the top of Carlyle's head." Let us strive to be all the more grateful for the pen-portrait, which alone is Mr. Froude's own work, and, in no spirit of fault-finding, let us try to supplement it by the help of others, and chiefly of Professor David Masson, who knew Carlyle then, and of Sir C. G. Duffy, who was Carlyle's companion in Ireland that summer. Carlyle is worth looking at.

"He was then," wrote Mr. Froude, "fifty-four years old," or in his fifty-fourth year, to be exact; "tall (about five feet eleven), thin, but at that time upright, with no signs of the later stoop"—a strong, well-knit frame, as Duffy remarked. "His body was angular," not an ounce of fat in his composition, "his face beardless, such as it is represented in Woolner's medallion, which is by far the best likeness of him in the days of his strength." Samuel Lawrence's portrait of Carlyle in his prime and various photographs show small side-whiskers. "His head was extremely long," but not narrow, a big (not *very* big, about $7\frac{1}{8}$) finely shaped head, with nose, &c., in good proportion, "with the chin"

slightly "thrust forward; the neck was thin; the mouth firmly closed," close drawn lips, "the underlip slightly projecting; the hair grizzled and thick and bushy," plentiful coarse wavy hair, dark brown in colour, and habitually well brushed. There was no trace of grey in it in 1849, or for many years afterwards. When he was over eighty, it was not all grey. "His eyes, which grew lighter with age, were then of a deep violet, with fire burning at the bottom of them, which flashed out at the least excitement. The face was altogether most striking, most impressive every way."

Here Mr. Froude's description ends. Emerson described Carlyle as "tall and gaunt, with a *cliff-like*" or "*jutting*" brow, accurately hitting off a notable feature, for the eyes were deep set. Of all the features, the eyes were the most striking, and yet it is only in describing them that Mr. Froude errs. *Not* violet, "piercing blue eyes" say both Duffy and Masson, corroborated by many others.[1] The pupils were rather small, "with great abundance of white around," says Mr. Patrick, the photographer who succeeded best with him. All agree about their expressiveness. Those "piercing blue eyes" of Carlyle's were strange eyes, not often seen, seen only in the heads of men of superlative intellect and force of character. They seemed to look *through* whomsoever he looked at. "When he asked me puzzling questions," says one, "I felt as if the eyes left their sockets and darted towards me." Emerson once called them "devouring eyes," and remarked justly that they signified strong executive talent.

When he walked or rode along a road, it seemed as if nothing escaped his observation. As a Scotch farm-servant expressed it, he was uncommonly "gleg," *i.e.* wide awake. What most impressed any one who spoke with

[1] I believe I have seen a portrait which may have misled Mr. Froude.

him casually, says Masson, was his deliberate and rather slow manner of utterance, as of a man who meant all he said, and perhaps still more the fact that he "looked straight and steadily at you." "His eyes were unshrinking, yet not insolent or aggressive; bold, yet gentle, changing continually as humour or passion moved him"—eyes that made the most skilful portrait-painters feel with new force the limits of their art, and made even a Millais abandon his canvas in despair,[1] just as sculptors despaired of doing justice to the marvellous play of expression on his features. "It is like modelling a flame," said Woolner.

Among all the changes of expression there was one that no observer ever saw. He never seemed cruel. Children and animals always turned to him with confidence, as to one of whose tenderness they were sure.

Carlyle's limbs were large, feet and hands in proportion. Miss Welsh, when he first went a-wooing her, playfully alluded to the awkwardness of his limbs. It had disappeared long before 1849, if indeed it ever existed elsewhere than in the lady's lively fancy. His hands were strong and shapely, fingers long — hands delicate to touch, strong to grasp, and always scrupulously clean. In dress and person, thorough cleanliness was characteristic of Carlyle. All who knew him say with emphasis that there was nothing slovenly about his appearance at any time.

He had a "dark ruddy complexion," remarkably ruddy. In extreme old age the redness of his cheeks surprised any one who saw him for the first time, for he passionately loved the fresh air and the sunshine all his days.

In his demeanour there was nothing crude, but "an air of silent composure and authority," as we are assured by Duffy, from whose description three sentences more may be taken to complete the picture.

[1] Unfinished picture now in the National Portrait Gallery.

"He was commonly dressed in a dark suit," brown being his favourite colour, "a black stock, a deep folding linen collar, and a wide-brimmed hat, sometimes changed for one of soft felt," or occasionally in summer for a straw hat. "A close observer would have recognised him as a Scotchman, and probably concluded that he was a Scotchman who had filled some important employment. There was not a shade of discontent or impatience discernible in his countenance; if these feelings arose, they were kept in check by a disciplined will."

Mr. Froude continues: "And I did not admire him the less because he treated me—I cannot say unkindly, but shortly and sternly. I saw then what I saw ever after—that no one need look for conventional politeness from Carlyle—he would hear the exact truth from him, and nothing else.

"We went afterwards into the dining-room, where Mrs. Carlyle gave us tea. Her features were not regular, but I thought I had never seen a more interesting-looking woman. Her hair was raven black, her eyes dark, soft, sad, with dangerous light in them. Carlyle's talk was rich, full, and scornful; hers delicately mocking. She was fond of Spedding, and kept up a quick, sparkling conversation with him, telling stories at her husband's expense, at which he laughed himself as heartily as we did."

Mr. Espinasse, another young admiring visitor, tells us Mrs. Carlyle was a "little lady, plain and rather sallow, but with beautiful dark eyes, and the most expressive of countenances."[1] The conversation Mr. Froude reports reminds one of a remark once made by Lady Ashburton. "I always feel a kind of average between myself and any other person I am talking with

[1] Mr. Espinasse's "Literary Recollections," p. 64.

—between us two, I mean: so that when I am talking to Spedding—I am utterably foolish—beyond permission."[1] Mr. Spedding was a very worthy man, and doubtless content that these bright ladies who liked him should say whatever pleased them.

Mr. Froude continues, unconsciously describing himself as he writes:—

"It struck me then, and I found always afterwards, that false sentiment, insincerity, cant of any kind would find no quarter, either from wife or husband; and that one must speak truth only, and, if possible, think truth only, if one wished to be admitted into that house on terms of friendship. They told me that I might come again. I did not then live in London, and had few opportunities; but if the chance offered, I never missed it."[2]

"Coming back to the society of Carlyle after the dons at Oxford," said Lady Ashburton, "is like returning from some conventional world to the human race."[1] Some Oxford dons were evidently of a similar opinion. Mr. Froude continued to seek Carlyle's society to the end, and became so far as any one was permitted to become a disciple. Carlyle had no thought or wish to found a sect. He expressly repudiated any such intention. He once warned a worthy and gifted but unwise friend that to set up a "New Religion" was spiritual suicide for any man of geniality.[3]

Sir C. G. Duffy tells us what the influence of Carlyle was on himself and his compatriots: "His writings were often a cordial to their hearts in doubt and difficulty," and "their lives were more sincere, simple, and steadfast

[1] Lord Houghton's "Monographs," pp. 249 and 251.

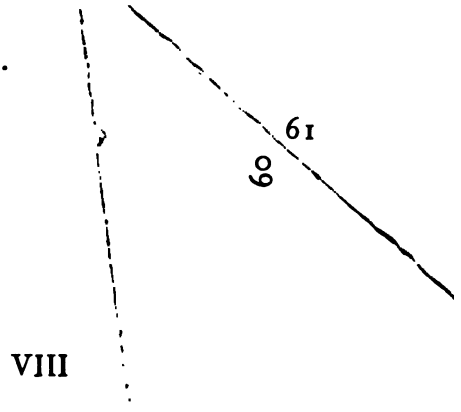
[2] Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," 1834–81, vol. i. pp. 457-460.

[3] The letter has no date, but internal evidence points to this time (about 1849).

because they knew him."[1] "Buckshot Forster" himself bears similar testimony. "It was touching," we find Lord Houghton writing to his wife in 1871, "to hear him tell the old man that if he ever did or became anything useful or notable, he owed it to the influence of his writings."[2] Why multiply evidence on this point? Were not two of the earliest admirers of "Sartor Resartus"—after Mrs. Carlyle—Emerson and Father O'Shea? The admirers of Carlyle are all the intelligent and sincere men and women who in the least understand him. They are of many sects, many nations, but of one species. Carlyle was too great a man to be a system-manufacturer or creed-cobbler. For these trades a certain limitation of intellect is the first requisite, and the second is sufficient self-conceit. Neither of these requisites was found in Carlyle, who, with no higher ambition than to work honestly and tell no lies, almost unconsciously, and without thought of setting an example to anybody, showed all men by precept and example how to live a heroic life "in the midst of surrounding gluttony and baseness."

[1] C. G. Duffy's "Conversations with Carlyle," p. 23.

[2] "Monkton Milnes, Lord Houghton," by T. Wemyss Reid, vol. ii. p. 250.



CHAPTER VIII

MR. FROUDE'S WRITINGS IN HIS DAYS OF DARKNESS

MR. FROUDE learned much from Carlyle. It is rather as a matter of history than as blame to Mr. Froude that it must be added that he seems to have profited less from Carlyle's teaching than many others did. Perhaps it was because he was too old and his habits were formed when he began to study Carlyle. Perhaps we merely see his defects better, because he fancied he could be in his way another Carlyle, and constituted himself biographer. There are one or two other things worth mention which help to explain his shortcomings.

Of course his natural character counts for a great deal. Only an acorn can grow into an oak, and while many critics have observed "something feminine" in Mr. Froude's style, it has not yet been generally remarked that the same might be said of his character. "In his earliest work of fiction," it has been said, "you can find the key to his whole life." He outgrew the state of mind it shows, but it certainly helps us to understand him, so readers may wish a glimpse of that now forgotten book of romance.

"Shadows of the Clouds" is the title. The contents are two stories, in one volume. Neither of them has anything to do with either shadows or clouds. The title may perhaps have been meant as a hint that we are to

read of the shady aspects of celestial beings, or at any rate divines.

Mr. Froude's friends say the book was never republished because it was an immature production. His enemies add that his father bought it up. Assuredly, if it fell into the hands of the gentlemen with whom rested the appointment of headmaster to the High School in Hobart Town, a post Mr. Froude had to surrender about the time he resigned his fellowship, they might be relieved from the imputation of bigotry for insisting, if they did insist, on his resignation. As he was twenty-nine years of age when he published the book, and had then been a Fellow of Exeter College for about five years, and a deacon of the Church for about three, it really cannot be unfair to examine this immature production. Whatever the reason for suppressing it, our hero wrote it.

The second story is perhaps the more immature of the two. "The Lieutenant's Daughter" is a story with two endings. It is written in scenes, and the reader is shown Catherine Gray, the daughter of a retired naval officer, a poor orphan girl at Exmouth, taken into the family of Sir John and Lady Carpenter, because Lady Carpenter wished to be an orphan's friend and to get a cheap governess for her children. The girl was seduced while there by Mr. Henry Carpenter, the nephew of Sir John, in the usual heartless and cruel way. Coming to London after her husband, as she calls and thinks him, she unfortunately fell into the company of a Miss Arthur, a procuress, who met her at Paddington Railway Station, and played the part of a friendly elderly lady. She went to Miss Arthur's house, and stayed there while Miss Arthur went to seek the missing husband.

The fact was that Miss Arthur, having discovered that the young lady from the country had been already

seduced by Mr. Henry Carpenter, saw at once how much he could help or might hinder her in making money at the girl's expense. So she went to him and had a familiar and friendly talk with him, as with an old customer apparently. She agreed to take the girl off his hands, so to speak, on condition that he wrote to her dictation a letter to give to Miss Gray. He wrote it, and the extraordinary and characteristic thing about the book is that *he* seems to be commended to our sympathy as much as his victim. We are almost expected to sympathise with his injured feelings while he thus wrote to the dictation of the veteran bawd.

I am permitted to quote only one hundred words from this story, and so cannot give the whole of the letter. The quotation marks show Mr. Froude's own words. The rest is paraphrase.

"My dearest Catherine,"—I am very sorry that you came after me. If you had remained at Clifton, I would have saved you the peril and expense of following me by sending you a letter of good advice "which might in the end lead to your good." It grieves me exceedingly that I can never meet you more. "I have received a positive command from my uncle, who is my guardian and second father, not to do so, and I need not tell you how sacred are the commands of a parent." Let us repent, my dearly beloved, of our past sins. What is past cannot be undone, but by true repentance we may make atonement. "Follow my example." Be good. It is only the sacred commands of my guardian that prevent me helping you with money. I cannot sin again by disobeying him. This makes me rejoice all the more at your good fortune in falling into such good company as my "truly excellent friends, the Miss Arthurs. They, Catherine, are truly good; they will think for you, and

decide for you." (*N.B.* The Misses Arthur were two sisters in the same business. They worked in partnership, and managed two high-class brothels, one the main shop and the other the branch. The letter proceeds).—I have told Miss Arthur everything, and she has promised to take charge of you, and "see you well provided for." True, Miss Arthur blames me. Her womanly feelings make her take your part. But I have to do what I see to be my duty, and my conscience consoles me even under the censures of a friend so esteemed as she. Nay, it is even a pleasure to me, sorely as I feel the loss of her friendship, that the "regard she once felt for me is transferred to one whom I have unhappily been a means of injuring." I implore you to place unbounded trust in her, and never doubt me, dear one, your loving friend for ever, HENRY CARPENTER.

With this letter in her hands, Miss Arthur soon provided for Miss Gray. The sanctity of copyright protects from our curiosity the details of what the author himself calls a "nauseous story." He dwells upon it in a rather nauseous manner—we do not lose much by the omission. Suffice it to mention the peculiar double ending. One version shows that Catherine Gray ended as other unfortunates do, while the other shows how everything would have fallen out differently, if her father had lived five years longer. In that case, she was not seduced, but found a straightforward man as lover and husband, and was perfectly happy and respectable!

To us the interesting thing about this story is the character of Henry Carpenter. This young man was sincere, forsooth, in the sentimental talk wherewith he beguiled Catherine Gray. He believed it for the moment, and that is to be counted to him for righteousness! Thackeray has finely remarked that there is "no greater

error than to suppose that weak and bad men are strangers to good feelings, and deficient of sensibility. Only, the good feeling does not last. Nay, the tears are a kind of debauch of sentiment."

When good natural feelings, which should stimulate a man to action, and make him stronger to do and to endure, are perverted into mere "pleasureable sensations," to be enjoyed passively, then we have the sentimental gentleman, apt to become the sentimental scoundrel. A scoundrel of this sort is more hopelessly vile than a mere human dog that has never had any feelings but those of an animal. The animal may awake to human feelings, but the sentimental knave has deliberately preferred darkness to light. He has made his option and is soon beyond hope—damned before he is dead.

"The Lieutenant's Daughter" is a story with a purpose, which the curious double ending is intended to drive home. The "lesson" of it is—we are the creatures of circumstances; he was as good as he could be, and she was as good as she could be. This is the inevitable conclusion of sentimentality. How can it be otherwise? The man who speaks and acts sincerely gains more strength of heart daily, even as a man's limbs are made stronger by exercise. The sentimental man, who "pumps up" feelings to humbug others or for the pleasure of the thing and does not use them for action, tends to grow weaker in character, even as he would find his limbs grow feeble if he used them chiefly for contemplation. Such a man soon sinks into moral debility, and is ready to whine, like a convicted criminal, "Circumstances were too strong for me."

We were spared a new contributor to the "literature of desperation," when Mr. Froude fell under the influence of Carlyle. Readers can now see why Carlyle was "short and stern" to him, when he was first introduced.

CHAPTER IX

"THE SPIRIT'S TRIALS"

THE other story, "The Spirit's Trials," is the first in the book, but was probably written after "The Lieutenant's Daughter," for it shows us Mr. Froude reading Carlyle and already making a step in advance. It is hardly possible to read it and doubt that it is essentially as autobiographic as *e.g.* the second book of "Sartor Resartus." Like Goethe and Smollett and Carlyle, the author probably drew upon his memory in describing the juvenile experiences of a hero who closely resembled himself.

Nobody supposes that Goethe was exactly the same as Wilhelm Meister, but nobody can study Wilhelm Meister without feeling that he understands Goethe better. "The Spirit's Trials" should be reprinted for the sake of the similar light which it throws on Mr. Froude's character. That it has *no* other claim to notice is fortunate for him.

Edward Fowler is the hero. Like James Anthony Froude he was the son of a church dignitary, and his father, Canon Fowler, is described in almost the very same words that Mr. Froude used thirty-four years later to describe his own father.

Canon Fowler was a "busy practical man of the world, far too much employed in being of active service to it to be able to spare time in attending to his children. . . ." So he mismanaged his gifted son, Edward, whose precocious talents were stimulated by his

tutors, vain of such a prodigy, and by his father, who was "anxious for the success of his children in life."

The prodigy was not robust in health, and had a habit even then of dealing in an evasive manner with comrades and teachers. But he was marvellously skilful with his books.

It seems likely that J. A. Froude was also far from robust when young; but this cannot be ascertained for certain.

In time Edward Fowler, like the juvenile Froude, was sent to Westminster School. Owing to his transcendent abilities and attainments, he was there classed with boys some years older than himself, and they treated him roughly.

In a similar plight, the juvenile Carlyle turned on a big persecutor and sent him sprawling in the mud, notwithstanding maternal injunctions and solemn promises.[1] But though there were no maternal injunctions to restrain young Fowler (for alas! he seems to have resembled young Froude in being motherless), still it never occurred to him to hit out in self-defence.

He had no courage at all, as his schoolmates joyfully discovered, and he appears to have soon had as many persecutors as there were boys at school. He became very skilful in avoiding persecution, and neglected even Greek grammar for the study of devious devices to escape his tormentors. He became a most accomplished liar, and might often have been seen "skulking along the walls and passages, mean, pitiful, and wretched-looking." He would do anything, right or wrong, to secure peace.

His favourite device was to feign illness, and so get access to the sick-room. The masters supposed he

[1] Moncure Conway's "Thomas Carlyle," p. 30.

wished to shirk his work, and complained to his father. The author is sarcastic on their failure to detect that his real motive was his *fear* of other boys. But posterity must forgive their blunder; for, as boys are made in England, not one in a hundred is likely to feign sickness to escape from the playground.

The wretched prodigy complained to an elder brother, but, like Punch's candidate for parliamentary honours, he laboured under the disadvantage of being too well known. The elder brother had often discovered him lying, and agreed with one of the masters that it was more likely that he was lying than that he had any cause of complaint.

The sufferings of this misunderstood boy are detailed at painful length, and as the writer is very severe on the stupidity of masters and relatives, an impartial biographer has to remark that possibly enough both masters and relatives aimed at shaming him into pluck. Even his brothers seem to have taught his sisters to look down on him. The masters at all events acted reasonably in leaving the boys to fight out their own battles.

So some years passed, and when Edward Fowler reached the senior classes he was no happier. "He sneaked and shirked along the streets, with his head no higher at fifteen than it had been at twelve—when he ceased to be a fag he was beaten for amusement."

Besides amusement, the other boys contrived to obtain much else out of him. His bills at the pastry-cook's were alarming. He embezzled his brother's money and obtained credit from stationers by false statements. This was one result of his attempts to purchase "peace at any price."

His father at first threatened him with a "cheap school" and a "trade," — threats which thoroughly

cowed this interesting boy, but did not put heart into him, rather the contrary. So at last Canon Fowler had to take his son away from Westminster School and beat him himself. The masters were probably wearied of a youth so much resembling the ass whose attitude seemed to mean, "Do not beat me, but if you will, you may."

Edward Fowler was kept at home for two years. His bills were numerous and yet his wardrobe was found to be in a bad condition. His father thought him a swindler and foretold transportation. This had a peculiar effect on him, or rather an effect which the author thought peculiar. The fact that he was unjustly suspected regarding his clothes made Edward think himself the most innocent and ill-treated of boys, and made him quite forget the cause he had given in other instances for just suspicion. An immature Oxford Fellow twenty-nine years of age might pardonably think this trait *peculiar*. Those who are familiar with criminals do not think so.

Edward Fowler apparently received no orders at home save to read and behave himself. The much abused father seems to have been considerate and wise; and it is pleasant to observe that when Mr. Froude grown old wrote expressly of his father, he was much more charitable to Archdeacon Froude than he was to Canon Fowler.

While studying thus at home, Edward Fowler at first received little guidance, and at seventeen he knew scarcely more of books than when he was a child of seven; but he had changed much since then in other respects. He had acquired all the faults of a slave. He was a most "acute observer" of the "failings and weaknesses" of others; and in thought he was always measuring himself against them, a habit of thought which, as Goethe

observed, hinders men from understanding each other. As often as he held "council with himself," he ended with the conviction that he had been most unjustly persecuted. His father saw fit to be stern to him, and the timid boy soon began to regard his father and apparently all other living creatures with concentrated "spleen" and "venom." Mr. Mozley tells us that young Froude too "very early encountered and felt the antagonism of authority. Parents laid down the law, &c. &c. . . ."

After two years so spent, Edward Fowler was sent to a private tutor to be prepared for the University, and at eighteen he went to Oxford. It is a curious coincidence that in Mr. Mozley's "Reminiscences" we read of James Anthony Froude at seventeen residing with "his tutor at the village of Merton." He also was then studying with a view to the University, and must have gone to Oxford not long after he was eighteen.

At Oxford Edward Fowler plunged into gaiety and manly sports. He had not much cash, but he could borrow. He had to send his father weekly a diary of his doings, but he could and did suppress whatever was likely to cause trouble. It was a sign of moral improvement, however, that it now pained him somewhat to do so; lying had cost him no effort at school. Amusements at home being denied him, he could seek them elsewhere. Moreover, he now reaped some advantage from his acute observation of others; and by being all things to all men, in quite another than the apostolic fashion, he became a general favourite.

He next fell in love with Miss Hardinge, a clergyman's daughter, and laying aside idle habits began to work hard for *her* sake. Unhappily that did not pay his debts, and while he was trying to negotiate a loan, the secret of his indebtedness came to his father's knowledge.

This led Edward Fowler to distrust Providence. Surely this mishap, cruelly thwarting his plans just when he decided to reform, was enough to show that circumstances could not be ruled by any man. Why try to be virtuous if one has to suffer all the same?

Canon Fowler behaved well. Of course he wished to know exactly all that Edward owed. But alas! Edward Fowler's arithmetic was confused, though he knew much Greek. Did he try to tell his father all, and fail by honest mistake? Or did he deliberately misstate, in order to deceive? That we have to ask this question about Edward Fowler is another curious coincidence between him and Mr. Froude, for there are few of Mr. Froude's books that do not set the critical reader a similar problem.

However it happened that Edward Fowler erred, err he did. The debts proved larger than Edward supposed they were, and his father at last decided that it would be his duty to let Mr. Hardinge know of them. Edward Fowler anticipated the disclosure, seeing it was coming, and himself communicated the news to Mr. Hardinge. He was evidently surprised to find that Mr. Hardinge was angry, and that Miss Hardinge wrote to say, she could not now think of marrying him.

The privileges of copyright protect the amours of Miss Hardinge, a sentimental young woman. Fortunately our chief concern is with Fowler.

He read her letter and fell into utter despair. Providence, he felt, could have nothing to say for itself now. He tried dissipation and was soon rusticated in disgrace. Then he began to bethink himself that if he did not mend his ways, he was in danger of being trodden down in the crowd, and the animal instinct of self-preservation asserted itself in a character that, however defaced or deformed by ill luck or ill behaviour, was tough and

strong. He began to brace himself up and set himself to rule circumstances and help himself, instead of drifting idly; and then he at once began to rise. He outgrew his cowardice more or less, and by vows and other strenuous efforts endeavoured to make a man of himself at last.

It may be remembered that Mr. Mozley spoke of gossip during young Froude's "undergraduateship" to the effect that he "had been disappointed in a love affair," and the ex-censor testifies that whatever the cause Froude was "hardly quite himself" during these years. Unless Mr. Mozley's memory is at fault as to the *date* of the gossip, it could not have been suggested by this book, which was published five years after Mr. Froude became a Fellow; and if Mr. Mozley is right, there is here another similarity between Fowler and Froude.

The coincidences in the subsequent careers of Edward Fowler and James Anthony Froude are much less doubtful. Edward Fowler, like Froude, honoured Mr. Newman and became his disciple. Whether Mr. Newman ever *wept* with Mr. Froude, history knoweth not; but he pressed Fowler's hand and dropped tears upon it. Yet Edward Fowler, like Froude, could not go on believing what Newman believed; but fell into doubts, &c. &c., and at last began to reverence Carlyle and read German. At this point, which was the point Mr. Froude had reached when the book was published, Fowler relieves the novelist from all further difficulties by dying of consumption, taking advantage of an invalid's privilege to have a sentimental flirtation with his old sweetheart, Emma Hardinge, now Mrs. Allen.

These numerous coincidences all point to the conclusion that such a very unlovely young gentleman as Edward Fowler, with his "passion of timidity" and

deceitfulness, would never have been the hero of Mr. Froude's earliest book unless his character had been sanctified in his creator's eyes by a certain resemblance to the creator's own.

Among other disagreeable corollaries that follow from this conclusion, it seems at least possible, and even probable, that the looseness of speech or readiness to lie which appeared in Edward Fowler may have been a feature of Mr. Froude's boyhood, as of St. Augustine's. Lying is natural to boys, and if Mr. Froude did not learn to speak truth at school he was not at all peculiar, the more's the pity. Mr. Mozley tells us that "in those days, probably even more than now, very few came out of a public school without learning the art of lying." Mr. Newman, he said, lamented the fact, and "warned men not to acquire too much facility and cleverness in excuses." Mr. Mozley explains this tendency by the conventions of public schools. Perhaps it was helped by a convention he did not suspect.

Explaining how the worthy Frank Edgeworth could not get employment as a teacher in England, Carlyle tells us that Edgeworth tried that career under a misapprehension; "ignorant that it is mainly the clergy whom simple persons trust with that trade at present; that his want of a patent of orthodoxy, not to say his inexorable secret heterodoxy of mind, would far override all other qualifications in the estimate of simple persons, who are afraid of many things, and are *not* afraid of hypocrisy which is the worst and one irremediably bad thing."

There was a curiously significant remark once made by a "well-known archdeacon, friend of Sumner, Bishop of Winchester." Mr. Mozley quotes it and calls it "unguarded," which it certainly was. "It's remarkable," said the 'well-known archdeacon,' "that all the most

spiritually minded men I have known were in their youth extraordinary liars."[1]

This utterance is well worth a little consideration. The habit of lying is at once a cause and an effect of a certain looseness of thought, a readiness to say and in a sense believe whatever one finds convenient. If Spirituality consists in orthodoxy, as the archdeacon doubtless implied, then the fact stated by him is not remarkable nowadays, in the sense of being surprising, though it is well worth remarking by educational reformers.

It may be objected that the clerical hypocrites or foolish canting persons who are allowed to direct education "at all events teach sound morality." Maybe they do. But example is more powerful than precept; and even if the youths do *not* see through their teachers, sound morality is little obliged to these gentlemen; for truthfulness, modesty, self-denial, industry, consideration for others, courage, all the virtues that go to make a man superior to an ape, are associated with legends which clever boys soon suspect to be fables; and all men familiar with the world know the depravity that is apt to ensue, when at the critical time between boyhood and manhood the clouds of doubt obscure the fair morning sky of life, and to the bewildered youth it appears uncertain whether any duty is really binding upon him.

"This depravity is the result of scepticism," shriek the hypocrites and simple persons. Nay, my friends in buckram, or "tied up in godly laces," it is the result of many things too numerous to mention at present: but your wooden-headed persistence in teaching as true what intelligent men can no longer believe, that is the cause of the scepticism, which often leaves a young man paralysed before temptations, which he might encounter with fairer

[1] Mozley's "Reminiscences," vol. i. pp. 244, 245.

hopes of success if he had learnt nothing from his early teachers but what he could *continue* to believe.

Cant has reigned too long. The ape-like *écrassez l'infame* of Voltaire found little echo here, because the dumb English nations felt that whatever else was false in religious teaching, the fact that a man had duties was still certain. But these same nations also feel that the first duty of a man and a spiritual teacher is truthfulness, and the deep growl of men slowly deciding at last to "clear their minds of cant" is becoming audible. The demand for "secular" teaching is more reasonable than even its advocates yet suppose.

Happily the English people and youths are subject to other influences as well as to those conventions which deprave the character. Timidity is after all the thing that causes most lying among boys, and the youth of England is apt to outgrow timidity even as "Henry Fowler" did.

On the whole, instead of wondering that Mr. Froude was no better, his first book might well make us wonder that he ever became as good as he was. What an extraordinary influence for good Carlyle must have had to enable the writer of this book to grow into the James Anthony Froude we know, a writer indeed of historical romances and other light literature; but with all his faults a man who endeavoured to be sincere, and whose influence on his readers is sometimes ennobling, never quite depraving. He continued to sink often into sentimental twaddle, but it was as David King of the Jews sank into sensuality, in spite of a continual struggle, often renewed, to do better; and against the worst excesses of sentimentality he struggled successfully.

Truly in this instance Carlyle strengthened the feeble knees to some purpose, and there is something very touching in the way in which Mr. Froude clung to Carlyle

when at last permitted to approach him freely. As long as Mrs. Carlyle lived, Mr. Froude was rather her friend than her husband's, and perhaps rather a society friend than a family friend. There are degrees in friendship. Miss Jewsbury, or the sentimental "Miss Gooseberry," as Mrs. Carlyle called her, was an old if not esteemed friend of Mrs. Carlyle, and was also a friend of Mr. Froude. No doubt she helped him to Mrs. Carlyle's favour; and though he confesses he never was nearly so intimate a friend as John Forster for example, yet when Mrs. Carlyle died his friendship with her and readiness to talk and listen about her made him dear to Carlyle, who esteemed him as a gifted man of honest intentions, and helped him as much as he could. But that was not an unusual thing for Carlyle to do, it was his way of life, especially in his closing years, when the trembling of his hand made other work impossible.

"Carlyle," says Mr. Froude, "seemed to attract every one who wanted help for body or soul, or advice on the conduct of life. The number of people who worried him on such matters . . . is hardly to be believed. Each post brought its pile of letters. . . . All asked for interviews. . . . He was marvellously patient. He answered most of the letters, he saw most of the applicants;" and among such a crowd Mr. Froude, as an old acquaintance of his wife, ready to wait in the drawing-room while Carlyle slept in the hope of a talk with him when he awakened, naturally saw more of him than most of the others. Mr. Froude joined Carlyle in many walks and drives. He assiduously read Carlyle's books, listened eagerly to his conversation, and sought his advice, clung to him, in fact, as formerly to Mr. Newman, and learned from Carlyle as much as he could.

CHAPTER X

MR. FROUDE AS A DISCIPLE AND AS A HISTORIAN

ABOUT fifteen years before Mr. Froude was introduced to Carlyle, John Sterling had become a deacon in the Church of England, and, though he soon quitted it, "the rest of his life," Carlyle tells us, was "in great part a laborious effort of detail to pick the fragments of it off him, and be free of it in soul as well as in title." Mr. Froude lived longer than Sterling; but it is clear enough that his theological adventures and his early clerical surroundings had a permanent effect upon him too. One cannot with impunity live for years in "unconscious or half-unconscious hypocrisy and quiet make-believe," and Mr. Froude remained more or less an actor to the end of his life. The impression he made on others was always to him the most important thing. He would have been a model Archbishop of Canterbury and a most successful Pope. Indeed he seems to have had some such feeling himself, and almost to have chafed at the recollection that it was his superior honesty, and little else, which made a successful clerical career impossible to him. That was nearly true, too. Assuredly, it was because he was more intelligent than most clergymen that he was unable to find a career among them. The more is the pity that he was not able to turn his thoughts away from them altogether, and abandon the bad habits of thought he had acquired in their society.

One of these ineradicable bad habits of thought was his way of looking on religion as an anodyne. It is the clerical and especially the sacerdotal or Roman Catholic conception of religion, but it is not peculiar to any creed. Let me explain.

Peace of heart and soul are attainable by us all; but only on strict conditions. A man must humble himself and work unweariedly in well-doing, speaking and acting the truth, ever striving to see clearly what he should do, and then doing it as a matter of course, not glorying over success or fretting too much over failure, but rather considering how to do better in future. The examples of heroes he can unfeignedly honour strengthen him in well-doing, and the whole world is full of beauty and music to the open eye and ear. Merely to live is a pleasure while the heart is at peace.

> "The heart aye's the part aye
> That makes us right or wrang."

Sorrow and work are the lot of man, the condition of life; but while his soul is at peace a man can sing at his work, and enjoy his rest. His pleasures grow naturally out of his labour, "like the colour petals from the flower." From pain and sorrow he can learn wisdom, and his very losses become blessed to him. Unconsciously he endeavours always to shape his way of life in harmony with the universe, for he springs to do whatever he sees he is called to do, as a well-drilled soldier springs to obey an order, without too curiously considering the consequences. He may pray in Christian fashion, or Mahomedan, or Buddhist, or even, if he really knows no better, he may "in his blindness bow down to wood and stone"; whatever his creed, he avoids what Luther called mere "buzzing of the lips," and in words he probably prays not at all, but in any case he offers to his Maker a sacrifice more

acceptable than any other—the sacrifice of a life which is all an *acted* prayer to that great Unknown Power in whose hands he feels himself to be—"Father, not my will, but Thine be done."

This is not a fanciful sketch. I have met such a man, nay several such. The history of heroes is the history of such men. Such a soul is in a state of health. In this habit of mind, in this way of living, in this and in this only is true religion.

It is not a matter of going or not going to church or temple. The clergy of all kinds may be called *soul-doctors*. A healthy mind does not need them. But when the soul is sick, and indolence or wrong-doing have made the mind diseased, advice is needed then.

The diseases of the soul, however, are considerably more complicated than those of the body. This is perhaps why it happens that so many of those who make a trade of soul-doctoring are quacks, who agree only in one thing, "pay us well"; so that a Goethe quietly remarks that "those who make use of devotion as a means and end generally are hypocrites." Witch-doctors, fakeers, Mahomedan Mullahs, Buddhist or Christian priests or parsons, all are soul-doctors, each promising, even as quack doctors for bodily ailments do, a sure and speedy cure. Alas! and in so many cases there is no cure possible. The soul-doctor, if he were honest, would have to admit this at least as often as the doctor who attends to the body. That the soul-doctors almost never admit it is "significant of much."

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that he is often most fortunate who does as Wilhelm Meister did:—

> "In truth, he uses not to sing and pray . . ."
> But "turns an earnest eye when mist's above him
> To his own heart, and to the hearts that love him."

The advice of a wise and sensible friend is sometimes worth more than a doctor's, even in bodily ailments. It is more often so in diseases of the soul. But the best advice often avails little, and nothing avails unless the patient is willing to minister to himself.

There are quacks, as I said, among the soul-doctors by trade. They have many nostrums, varied according to race and epoch, and some of these quacks are very cunning in making disease chronic. They "pretend to heal, and while they salve, they tickle still the sore." Sometimes they even try to excite disease. A religious devotee seems as pitiable as a morphomaniac, and equally in need of skilful treatment.

But the soul-doctors are not all quacks. Some of them are honest men, who abide by foolish nostrums through ignorance, but do not neglect the important matters of diet and regimen, and know when to leave nature to effect a remedy. The increasing difficulty men have in believing old mythologies makes the number of honest clergymen tend to diminish, but it is still considerable.

Now Mr. Froude was the son of a parson and bred for the "Church," a church abounding with well-paid Scribes and Pharisees who traded on popular delusions. It was, therefore, as natural for him to think that all men and women should be continually dosed with what he called religion, as for a pill-vendor's son to think that human beings were specially created to consume pills. Thus it was that after he had discovered that the mythology of Christianity was incredible, he thought there was nothing else in it, and that somehow or other, the true religion, if one could discover it, must be a first-rate anodyne or soporific. It would, for example, be difficult for any one to put more delusions and errors in twenty-one words than Mr. Froude did when he said of Mrs.

Carlyle and Carlyle: "He had deranged the faith in which she had been brought up, but he had not *inoculated* her with his own."[1]

To "inoculate" religion! Napoleon is said to have alluded to his Concordat with the Pope as the "vaccination of religion," calculated I suppose to protect us against the worst excesses of superstition as vaccination protects us against small-pox. But Napoleon *knew* he was sneering!

Mr. Froude might say he merely meant that, owing to Carlyle's influence, Miss Welsh ceased to believe in orthodox Christianity. If so, it may as well be mentioned that, if Miss Welsh ever believed in Christian doctrine, she had apparently ceased to do so before she met Carlyle. She was never at any time addicted to divinity. But what is most noteworthy is Mr. Froude's attitude to the subject. He could not, strive how he would, see anything more in religion than its superstitions and "poisoned gingerbread" consolations. Indeed he tells us, "I felt that I had been taken in, and I resented it."[2]

Another result of this way of thought was Mr. Froude's occasional flippancy. A sentimental man, he had little experience of earnest practical religion, and had not Carlyle's sympathy with all genuine human feelings, and loving tenderness for those simple souls who, albeit in ignorance, clave with undivided hearts to the old faith. As he continued to seek Carlyle's society, he had sometimes to wince under criticisms provoked by utterances likely to offend such. Thus we find him writing in a private letter on January 12, 1871: "Carlyle has been angry too. . . . He knows perfectly that the life has gone out of modern Calvinistic theology, but he

[1] Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," 1795–1835, ii. p. 420.
[2] "Short Studies," iv. p. 297.

likes to see the shell of the flown bird still treated with reverence."[1]

To call Mr. Froude insincere in the ordinary sense of that word would be misleading. He was seldom conscious of anything but perfect sincerity. And yet the perfect sincerity which alone makes written words perennially valuable was never quite reached by him. Byron too, as Carlyle remarked in the essay on Burns, hated insincerity, heartily detested it, and declared formal war against it in words. Yet he also never quite reached sincerity. "So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment, which might seem the simplest of all: to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without errors involuntary or wilful!" Whether Mr. Froude had force of character and intellect enough to have reached perfect sincerity under other circumstances is perhaps doubtful. But his early training made it doubly difficult. The habits of make-believe and loose readiness to believe whatever he wished to believe, which he had learned perhaps in boyhood, and afterwards in part at least from his clerical associates, could not be laid aside like a garment, could not, indeed, be laid aside without a far harder struggle than Mr. Froude felt called upon to make. He was in haste to write, and to win success in his writing—what is called success. He had already learned the art of pleasant writing. From Carlyle he learned to prefer writing history to writing fiction. But Miss Strickland and Macaulay were the popular historians when Mr. Froude began to visit Carlyle, strange as the fact may seem now. Mr. Froude was too shrewd to mistake the meaning of that fact; and if it must be said that he never learned from Carlyle that devotion to the truth, and to nothing but the truth, which is the essence of Carlyle's teaching,

[1] *Blackwood*, December 1894, article by J. Skelton.

it must be added that the reason was that he did not earnestly try.

"An experienced publisher," he tells us, "once said to me: 'Sir, if you wish to write a book which will sell, consider the ladies'-maids. Please the ladies'-maids, you please the great reading world.'"[1] Mr. Froude seems to have taken this advice. To see as well as he conveniently could the facts of the period he decided to write about, and then to write about it as vividly as possible, with as much care for accuracy as the time available allowed, that was Mr. Froude's method in all his work. No other method would have paid; and he was not disposed to work without payment. But, as Carlyle said in the opening paragraph of his "Cromwell," "It is with other feelings than those of poor peddling Dilettantism, other aims than the writing of successful or unsuccessful Publications, that an earnest man occupies himself in those dreary provinces of the dead and buried." Mr. Froude had his reward. His "History of England" sold well, and he became a "distinguished literary gentleman." But when the History, published in instalments during fourteen years, was nearing completion, his friend and teacher had sorrowfully to record this opinion: "To write the History of England as a kind of BIBLE (or in parts and snatches, to *sing* it if you could), this were work for the highest Aristos or series of Aristoi in Sacred Literature (really a sacred kind, this); and to be candid, I discover hitherto no incipiences of this; and greatly desire that there were some!"[2]

Carlyle did not name Mr. Froude, and blamed him chiefly when speaking to himself alone. Mr. Froude's faults seemed, perhaps, partly those of his new profession

[1] Mr Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," 1795–1835, vol. ii. 374.

[2] Miscellanies, "Shooting Niagara and after?" Part VI.

as a man of letters, so that he was as much to be pitied as blamed. This was probably the excuse he made for himself. In 1856, the year in which the first two volumes of Mr. Froude's History appeared, Carlyle said in conversation to Mr. Knighton: "The most contemptible man of the day is the literary man—the honest shoeblack is a more respectable and useful citizen. If I knew of any young man going to devote himself entirely to literature as a profession, I should say, 'For God's sake, sir, stop, don't; be an honest, useful man any other way. You will never be *that* way.' Men write without thinking nowadays. Every one thinks he can write—that's all the thinking many do. *Even history is written without research.*"[1]

In 1863 Carlyle praised Mr. Froude's editorial work in *Fraser's Magazine*, but his opinion of Mr. Froude's other work did not rise as years passed, rather the contrary. In 1872, when Mr. Froude went to America, Carlyle referred cordially to him in a letter to Emerson, —"Do your best and wisest towards him, for my sake, withal."[2] The result of Mr. Froude's lecturing, however, did not please Carlyle, who wrote to John Forster that Mr. Froude should not have taken "our extremely dirty Irish linen" to wash there, and "call America to see."[3]

1879 is the date of Mr. Froude's "Cæsar: a Sketch," and when he gave Carlyle a copy of the book, Carlyle read and condemned it, saying, "It tells me nothing of Cæsar." Mr. Froude was greatly disconcerted at this, and begged Carlyle to read it again. The good-natured old man complied, but indicated with emphasis that his opinion was not altered. Thereupon Mr. Froude ceased

[1] *Contemporary Review*, June 1881.

[2] Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson, ii. p. 353.

[3] Espinasse's "Literary Recollections," p. 121.

his visits to Carlyle's house, and did not resume them till Carlyle's niece wrote and asked him to do so. He did resume his visits then, and after a while felt rather ashamed of himself. He explained (not to Carlyle, who apparently heard no more of the subject) that he had been so severely criticised that he "felt like the drenched hen in 'Frederick the Great'" (see Book xvi.).

In fairness to Mr. Froude, let us not forget that, as Sir C. G. Duffy said, Carlyle "insisted on a high and perhaps impossible standard of duty in the men whom he discussed; but it was a standard he lived up to himself, and it only became chimerical when it was applied indiscriminately to all who were visible above the crowd. His own life was habitually spent in work, and belonged to a moral world almost as far apart from the world in which the daily business of life is transacted as the phantom land of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"[1] Let this be remembered, in fairness to Mr. Froude. At the same time, in fairness to Carlyle, let us not suppress the fact that he saw and deplored, and as a faithful friend endeavoured to correct Mr. Froude's besetting sin of inaccuracy.

Carlyle, remarked Tyndall, "proved all things, with the view and aim of holding fast that which was historically good. Never to err would have been superhuman; but if he erred, it was not through indolence or lack of care. The facts of history were as sacred in his eyes as the 'constants' of gravitation in the eyes of Newton; hence the severity of his work."[2]

This is the only truly scientific method of writing history; but the word "scientific" is misleading. History is at once both a science and an art; and so a good history differs from such a work as Newton's *Principia*

[1] Sir C. G. Duffy's "Conversations with Carlyle," Part I. pp. 50, 51.
[2] Tyndall's "New Fragments," p. 357.

in this, that it has in it a perennial element that can never be superseded. Thus it is that Herodotus is still the "father of history."

The necessary imperfections of knowledge render a complete scientific account of human life for ever impossible. We never can know men as well as a botanist, *e.g.*, can know flowers. Our manufacturers of philosophical systems—to say nothing of theologians—and our omniscient pseudo-scientific historians are about as wise as those old sages who devoted their lives to the search for the "philosopher's stone," or cracked their heads against the hard problem of perpetual motion.

The only wise historical method is like that of Teufelsdröckh, "at best that of Practical Reason, proceeding by large Intuition" into the meaning of what facts can be known. But the facts of history are far more difficult to ascertain and understand than the facts of science. Indeed if we remember that as a rule no man can be understood completely unless by one who is wiser than himself, we can easily see why good historians are so rare. A *great* historian *must* be a *great man.*

What is possible in a measure to any conscientious man is accuracy, and this therefore is the first requisite in a historian. To this extent any newspaper writer can be a scientific historian if he faithfully tries. But there is more than accuracy needed for such histories as Carlyle's. Wordsworth is reported to have said he could write like Shakespeare, "if he had the mind," and received the retort, "Yes, it is *only* the mind that is wanting." Similarly, by reason of what is called *genius*, Carlyle was of a different species from Rankes, Gardiners, and other dry-as-dust labourers, though in accuracy of detail little if at all superior to some of them. He was to them what Herodotus was to an analist, or Edward Gibbon

to a bluebook-bug, or what Newton was to ordinary scientific gentlemen.

Mr. J. A. Froude, again, belongs to a third species. He may be likened to the gentlemen who in the last century wrote such books as "Newton's Philosophy for Ladies," or who enrich the bookstalls of to-day with "Popular Guides" to anything and everything, for the first condition of sound and permanent historical work, painstaking accuracy, was never fulfilled by Mr. Froude. That was a lesson he could not learn from Carlyle; perhaps *would* not learn, and certainly *did* not. It would have been fatal to ready-writing, and to all hopes of immediate success. It was "too hard for flesh and blood." Mr. Froude learned much, however, from Carlyle, and could not have spent his time better than in visits to him. Indeed, he learned much more than he has ever avowed. In all his writings there is little valuable thought which cannot be traced to Carlyle. It would be a tedious and needless task to multiply proofs of this, but one instance may be given.

The *Times* in its obituary notice of Mr. Froude has these sentences:—

"Nowadays, when we have the Calendars of State Papers and the writings of Mr. Brewer to go upon, it is a commonplace to say that the character of Henry VIII., political and private, is in many points defensible; but things were different forty years ago. Mr. Froude must be given the credit of having divined, with the instinct of genius, that the traditional character of the king was not his real character, and that it owed its lurid colours partly to religious partisanship, and partly to the general dislike of absolute authority that has been the common feature of Englishmen for centuries."

It was in 1856 that the first volume of Mr. Froude's History appeared, and seven years before, in 1849,

when Mr. Froude began his visits to Carlyle, we find Carlyle speaking thus to Sir C. G. Duffy about Henry VIII. :—

"Henry," he said, "when one came to consider the circumstances he had to deal with, would be seen to be one of the best kings England had ever got. He had the right stuff in him for a king, he knew his own mind; a patient, resolute, decisive man, one could see, who understood what he wanted, which was the first condition of success in any enterprise, and by what methods to bring it about. He saw what was going on in ecclesiastical circles at that time in England, and perceived that it could not continue without results very tragical for the kingdom he was appointed to rule, and he overhauled them effectually. He had greedy, mutinous, unveracious opponents, and to chastise them was forced to do many things which in these sentimental times an enlightened public opinion" (laughing) "would altogether condemn; but when one looked into the matter a little, it was seen that Henry for the most part was right."

"I suggested," Sir C. G. Duffy continues, "that, among the things he wanted and knew how to get, was as long a roll of wives as the Grand Turk. It would have been a more humane method to have taken them, like that potentate, simultaneously than successively; he would have been saved the need of killing one to make room for another, and then requiring Parliament to disgrace itself by sanctioning the transaction."

"Carlyle replied that this method of looking at King Henry's life did not help much to the understanding of it. He was a true ruler at a time when the will of the Lord's anointed counted for something, and it was likely that he did not regard himself as doing wrong in any of

these things over which modern sentimentality grew so impatient." [1]

It cannot be doubted that Mr. Froude often heard similar remarks, and that "the instinct of genius" which the *Times* recognises was Carlyle's genius, not Mr. Froude's. It must be remarked that Mr. Froude has carefully suppressed this important obligation while parading others less important.

This was bad enough, but it was characteristic of Carlyle that he never seemed to notice this. It was Mr. Froude's inaccuracy in stating facts which annoyed him. Nearly all Mr. Froude's work was hurriedly done. Though not always "seeking copy," he seldom wrote anything which could bear close scrutiny. What Carlyle said of Thiers' History is generally true of Mr. Froude's: "Dig where you will, you come to water."

[1] Sir C. G. Duffy's "Conversations with Carlyle," Part II. pp. 103, 104.

CHAPTER XI

MR. FROUDE AS A BIOGRAPHER OF CARLYLE

WHEN Mr. Froude had decided to write the Life of Carlyle he did not assiduously note Carlyle's conversation, as Boswell did Johnson's. Of all the reporters of it, he is perhaps the worst, although his opportunities were the best. He speaks vaguely of its high qualities, but shows us almost none. When we read his description, it seems as if done by a traveller who could see nothing but plenty of water in Niagara Falls, where the sun flashes rainbows on the foam, and clouds rise from the river into the sky above, whereupon he filled his little water-bottle from the river, and emptying it said: "Genuine Niagara, though there's less of it than you supposed. Perfectly genuine! You can now say you have seen Niagara." Ten pages of Sir C. G. Duffy's "Conversations with Carlyle" are worth more than Mr. Froude's four volumes, and even in description, as distinguished from reporting of Carlyle's talk, Mr. Froude though at his best is inferior to many other writers. Nothing he has written, for example, is so good as these sentences from Moncure Conway's "Thomas Carlyle": "Those who have listened to the wonderful conversation of Carlyle know well its impressiveness and its charm: the sympathetic voice now softening to the very gentlest, tenderest tone as it searched far into some sad life, little known or regarded, or perhaps evil spoken of, and found there traits to be admired, or signs of nobleness,—then rising through all

melodies in rehearsing the deeds of heroes; anon breaking out with illumined thunders against some special baseness or falsehood, till one trembled before the Sinai smoke and flame, and seemed to hear the tables break once more in his heart: all these, accompanied by the mounting, fading fires in his cheek, the light of the eye, now serene as Heaven's blue, now flashing with wrath, or presently suffused with laughter, made the outer symbols of a genius so unique that to me it had been unimaginable had I not known its presence and power. His conversation was a spell; when I had listened and gone into the darkness, the enchantment continued; sometimes I could not sleep till the vivid thoughts and narratives were noted in writing."[1]

The last of these sentences gives us the clue to Mr. Froude's failure. A few sentences written down at once, while the words were still ringing in one's ears, are worth many volumes of vague and distant recollections; and though Mr. Froude visited Carlyle for over thirty years, from 1849 to 1881, it does not appear that he noted down any of Carlyle's talk while it was fresh in his mind. Internal evidence would lead us to say he never did so; but Mr. Froude speaks of his "notes *hastily* written down," and some of these notes may have referred to conversations. If so, this part of Mr. Froude's work was done like the rest, so hastily that it might as well have been left undone.

He has not atoned for this negligence by showing diligence, when actually engaged in writing his "Thomas Carlyle," in the investigation of all the relevant details. That would have needed time and pains. He had had some pleasant talks with Mrs. Carlyle, and Miss Jewsbury was ready to supply all deficiencies in what he heard from her, so he thought he knew all about Carlyle's life,

[1] Moncure D. Conway's "Thomas Carlyle," pp. 14, 15.

and did not hesitate to write down without investigation whatever he supposed must have happened. He was allowed to use a mass of MSS.—chiefly old letters written by Carlyle. "Rubbish" Carlyle thought and called them, but Mr. Froude saw how to make a saleable book out of them, padded with some slight commentaries, such as Heuschrecke might have written on Teufelsdröckh. That was what he did. He named his four volumes "Thomas Carlyle," and then turned to the next business.

His book was carefully manufactured, according to his own rules of working. The narrative is carefully arranged. It is nearly perfect in grammar, and it is a readable book. The story is an artistic whole, able to bear comparison with the latest successful novel. As a description of Carlyle it is a failure. It is not even an account of the facts of Carlyle's life as ascertained by inquiry; it is merely an account of Carlyle as he appeared to Mr. Froude. If Mr. Froude had so described it, he would have been less blameworthy. But he pretended to have sifted all the evidence he could find, when as a matter of fact he had only dipped into it, seeking nothing but a few entertaining passages suitable for quotation. He repeatedly assures us that he has no wish but to tell the truth, and the "good easy man" seems to fancy that nothing else is needed. It is, however, a matter of common experience that persons of good intelligence narrate in perfect good faith stories which on investigation are found to be false. We do not, therefore, call them liars—at least we should not! We should say they are mistaken. Even so Mr. Froude having allowed his pen to run away with him mistakes, and mistakes, and mistakes, till at last the critical reader loses all patience, and like Mr. Lilly declines to believe anything he says without corroboration. His narrative is not a criminally false one, but it is a book of blunders.

In some things, though not in wit, Mr. Froude resembled Voltaire. Both were educated under clerical auspices; both felt they had been taken in by the clergy and resented it. Both were adroit men of the world, and both "consummate Artists in Speech," though Voltaire far surpassed Mr. Froude in these, as well as in versatility and in most other respects. Neither excelled as an original thinker; both excelled as popular expounders of the thoughts of others. Both were vain. Voltaire's view of Frederick and, in a less degree, Froude's view of Carlyle were jaundiced by mortified vanity. But, even when we make allowance for the circumstances under which each wrote, and remember that Voltaire did not intend his *Mémoires* to be published, it must be said that Voltaire's scandalously false account of his hero and friend, Frederick the Great, is more shameful to him than "Thomas Carlyle" is to Mr. Froude. Mr. Froude was scarcely aware of any ill-feeling as he wrote that book, and was probably not consciously insincere. It is to Voltaire's "Charles XII." rather than to Voltaire's *Mémoires* that Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle" might be compared. "Charles XII." is superior both in accuracy and as a piece of writing, but it is clear that both writers concentrated their energies on producing a readable narrative, and took little pains to be accurate. In the one case as in the other, the writer seems also unable to comprehend in any tolerable degree the character of his hero. Indeed both Voltaire and Mr. Froude were writing of men above them and beyond their comprehension, and neither was fully aware of that.

In writing of Erasmus, whom he could understand, Mr. Froude said that common historians "resent, perhaps unconsciously, the sense that they stand on a lower level, and revenge their humiliation when they come to

describe great men by attributing to them the motives which influence themselves." Truly, this is a common failing, of which examples might be found wherever human beings are gathered together. It is partly the explanation of Mr. Froude's failure to describe Thomas Carlyle; a failure which even a much less gifted man might have avoided if he had possessed greater sincerity of character, and the reverence which in sight of such a man sincerity would have taught. As Carlyle remarked in a letter to Goethe: "It is not altogether, yet it is in some degree, with mind as with matter in this respect: where the humblest pool, so it be but at rest within itself, may reflect faithfully the image even of the sun."

Mr. Froude's failure was his misfortune as well as his fault. He revered Carlyle, but not enough. When he came to write of Carlyle, his habit of slipshod work was a "second nature." It is a pity that his "Thomas Carlyle" must be examined further, a pity for all of us, for it is not a cheerful book. But the first step to knowledge is to realise one's own ignorance, and more evidence is perhaps needful to convince some readers that to any one, who knows Carlyle only as Mr. Froude described him, it may be truly said—

> "Thou mayst of double ignorance boast,
> Who knowest not thou nothing know'st."

CHAPTER XII

MR. FROUDE'S "THOMAS CARLYLE"

MR. FROUDE'S "Thomas Carlyle" is wrong not in details only, but in its general outlines. It is indeed inconsistent with itself, and a most amusing account might be given of its incongruities. But it is more profitable to note that of all those who knew Carlyle well, none but Mr. Froude found him a dismal doctrinaire. As Sir C. G. Duffy remarks, "Before his great trouble, and even afterwards, his manner was composed and cheerful, and in earlier times no one was readier to indulge in badinage and banter; a smile was much more familiar to his face than a frown or a cloud."

Sir C. G. Duffy, however, though in his "Young Ireland" (p. 91) he has said that Mr. Froude "apparently dreams his facts," maintains a stern and significant silence as to Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," and is only indirectly not directly a witness against it.

Mr. David Masson, emeritus Professor of English Literature at Edinburgh, and Historiographer Royal of Scotland, was for more than thirty years an intimate friend of Thomas Carlyle, and his "Lectures on Carlyle" contain a very just criticism of Mr. Froude's books. We must not, he tells us, "forget Mr. Froude's emphatic explanation that, in his conception of Biography, the first duty of a Biographer is unflinching honesty. . . . Who will gainsay this principle? Not I, at any rate. All this I have in my mind; and it is because, while

I have all this in my mind, I still cannot but hold Mr. Froude responsible for much of that current desecration of Carlyle's memory which he himself must regret, and also because I cannot recognise the Carlyle of Mr. Froude in the nine volumes as the real and total Carlyle I myself knew, that I will point out some of those respects in which, as it seems to me, there has been editorial and biographical mismanagement."[1]

In other words, Mr. Masson declares Mr. Froude's portrait is not a likeness, however striking it may be as a picture. There could not be a better witness, and if needful a page could be filled with merely the names of others who corroborate him on this important point. But that is unnecessary, as no credible and competent witness can be found to contradict his evidence. So let one more witness suffice here.

Mr. Moncure D. Conway was a friend of Thomas Carlyle and apparently a friend of Mr. Froude. In the *New York Forum* lately he quoted a conversation with Mr. Froude and said: "In his Life of Carlyle Froude certainly meant to tell the whole truth, but he could not resist a picturesque situation or a dramatic surprise; he was overpowered by his imaginative art; and the result is that most of those who knew Carlyle and his wife intimately feel that the world generally does not know the real man and woman. A true, critical, and impartial life of Carlyle remains still the desideratum of modern English Biography."

Let us take one example of what the last-named witnesses mean. Both Professor Masson (in his lectures on "Carlyle Personally and in his Writings," pp. 23–30) and Mr. Conway (in his "Thomas Carlyle," chaps. iii.–v. pp. 22–53) have given their accounts of Carlyle's visit to Edinburgh in 1866, and the few days he spent there

[1] "Carlyle Personally and in his Writings," pp. 10, 11.

after delivering the Rectorial address. Professor Tyndall has also described this visit in his "New Fragments" (pp. 358–367). All these three gentlemen were eye-witnesses, and all three contradict Mr. Froude's account. Mr. Froude was not himself an eye-witness, and apparently never thought of taking the pains to question those who were. Professor Masson deplores "Mr. Froude's habit of implicitly accepting Carlyle's own soliloquisings and journalisings as always a sufficient record of the facts of his real life, and spinning the narrative out of these exclusively, without quest of further information or of other evidence." "Mr. Froude," remarks Professor Masson, "has not supplemented the information derived from these (letters, journals, &c.) by any such amount of independent inquiry and research as is usually expected from a biographer."

It would perhaps have been too much to expect a distinguished literary gentleman in a hurry to question Professor Masson, or Professor Tyndall, or any of the other eye-witnesses, who would have assuredly been delighted to tell him what they remembered; but Mr. Conway's book appeared in 1881 and Mr. Froude's in 1885,[1] so there was no reasonable excuse for ignoring Mr. Conway's account. Yet it is quite clear that Mr. Froude either had never seen Mr. Conway's book, or if he had seen it, had forgotten it, when he was writing about the Edinburgh visit.

Readers may now ask what evidence there is on the other side. The answer is that Professors Masson and Tyndall and Mr. Conway are all friendly to Mr. Froude personally, and that no competent witness is more favourable to him.

To prevent misunderstanding it may be added that by any one who wishes to be a witness as to Mr. Froude's

[1] "Thomas Carlyle," 1834–1881, 2 vols., 1885.

accuracy, one of two conditions must be fulfilled. Either he must have had a personal knowledge of Carlyle, and so be able to compare Mr. Froude's narrative with his own observations; or he must have critically examined something Mr. Froude has written. Critically examining would in this case mean investigating the statements made, so as to ascertain how much truth is in them. Many writers, such as the well-meaning but foolish Mrs. Ireland, fulfil neither condition, and the same is true of most private individuals, who more modest and sensible than these writers have not offered themselves as witnesses. Vague guessing is quite permissible to spectators in the gallery, but it is a nuisance in the witness-box. The judge and jury cannot be expected to listen patiently to hasty suppositions based merely on what previous witnesses have said. Both judge and jury, anxious only to arrive at a decision in harmony with the facts, would find these hasty suppositions a positive hindrance, and as such ignore them. In a literary inquiry we are independent of legal rules, but not of logic and common sense. We must discount hearsay evidence, and believe nothing but what there is credible evidence for. Truly, we have more cause to attend closely to facts than the most conscientious man in a jury box. For to the man in the jury box the truth of his verdict matters little, although to the parties in the suit it is all-important. In this case, the truth of the conclusions we draw is of importance to ourselves and to ourselves only. Thomas Carlyle while he lived was indifferent to our verdict, and now he cannot hear it. He appealed not to us. It is for our own sake only that we read and write about him. Let us, in justice to ourselves, forget that he ever offended our prejudices. Let us "clear our minds of cant," and considering candidly whatever we can ascertain to be true of him, strive to see "with our mind's eye" this man,

and as the first preliminary, to see whether the words of Mr. Froude, who announces himself as the true historian of Carlyle's Life, are worthy of belief or not.

What Professor Norton has said is true: "To exhibit completely the extent and quality of the divergence of Mr. Froude's narrative from the truth, the whole story would have to be rewritten."[1] However, in order that any reader who so chooses may even now see for himself, and become a critical witness to the extent of one page, let us take a page of Mr. Froude's book at random, one out of about 1860 pages.

I open vol. i. at p. 5, and find it not worse than the average to all appearance. It begins with part of a quotation from the "Reminiscences," and the whole page is either quotation or paraphrase from that book. Let the reader turn to the "Reminiscences" as now edited by Professor C. E. Norton, vol. i. p. 28, and compare the 4⅜ lines at the head of this page with the original. He will find sixteen errors in punctuation, unmarked omission of words or brackets, insertion and alteration of words. These are all errors of the press, and only the number of them, sixteen in less than five lines, is worth mention.

The next sentence is a paraphrase of two sentences in vol. i. p. 29 of the "Reminiscences."

Froude.—"'Travelling tinkers,' 'Highland drovers,' and such like were occasional guests at Brownknowe."

Reminiscences.—"Tinkers also, nestling in outhouses, melting pot-metal, and with rude feuds and warfare, often came upon the scene. These with passing Highland Drovers were perhaps their only visitors."

The next sentence is wholly in quotation marks, and raises the question what quotation marks mean in Mr. Froude's pages. Mr Froude's quotation is thus:—

"'Sandy Macleod, a pensioned soldier who had served

[1] Appendix to "Early Letters," vol. ii. p. 367.

under Wolfe, lived in an adjoining cottage, and had stories to tell of his adventures.' "

We read in the "Reminiscences" (pp. 28, 29): "One Macleod, 'Sandy Macleod,' a wandering pensioner, invalided out of some Highland Regiment (who had served in America,—I must think with General Wolfe) had strayed to Brownknowe with his old wife, and taken a Cottage of my Grandfather. He, with his wild foreign legends, and strange half-idiotic half-genial ways, was a great figure with the young ones. . . ." He "was much about their house, working for his rent and so forth. . . ."

As readers see, the quotation, notwithstanding the quotation marks, is after all merely a paraphrase. Notice also how Carlyle carefully indicates that he merely "must think," *i.e.* conjecture that "Sandy Macleod" had served under Wolfe. In Mr. Froude's version this conjecture is stated as if it were an ascertained fact. Other remarks might be made, but for brevity let these suffice.

The next three sentences run:—

"Old Thomas Carlyle, notwithstanding his rough, careless ways, was not without cultivation. He studied 'Anson's Voyages,' and in his old age, strange to say, when his sons were growing into young men, he would sit with a neighbour over the fire, reading, much to their scandal, the 'Arabian Nights.' . . . They had become, James Carlyle especially, and his brother through him, serious lads, and they were shocked to see two old men occupied on the edge of the grave with such idle vanities."

These three sentences require the following corrections:—

The last sentence seems to imply that James Carlyle had only one brother. Three are named and described in the "Reminiscences" (i. 33, 34). The statement that James Carlyle's brother had *through him* become a serious lad is questionable, and if it means that he had become

religious, it is not true. As for the statement that they "were shocked" to see two old men reading the "Arabian Nights," we read in the "Reminiscences" (p. 29) that James Carlyle "(armed with zealous conviction) scrupled not to censure them openly," but of his brothers there is no mention in this connection. On the contrary we read (pp. 33, 34) that "except my father, none of them attained a decisive religiousness," and that none of them except James Carlyle ever "grew to *heartily* detest" the "hard *strikings*" they had all been noted for. These statements make it very unlikely that any of the brothers joined in censuring the reading of the "Arabian Nights"; and as no authority can be discovered for the statement that one of them did so, we must conclude it to be a mistake.

There is a still more interesting misstatement involved in these three sentences. At the time James Carlyle censured what his father was doing, he was, says Mr. Froude, a "lad," "growing into a young man," and his father was "on the edge of the grave." Now, old Thomas Carlyle died in 1806, aged 84, and his son James, born in 1758, died in 1832.[1] James Carlyle, therefore, was twenty years of age in 1778, or about twenty-eight years before his father died, and more than twenty years before one could say his father was "on the edge of the grave." The precise time when James Carlyle rebuked the reading of the "Arabian Nights" is not expressly stated in the "Reminiscences," and Mr. Froude, using his imagination to fix the date, forgets the maxim of a great novelist, to see that the facts invented cohere together: for if James Carlyle was a lad at the time, his father was almost in the prime of life, and if his father was "on the edge of the grave," James Carlyle was in the 48th year of his age. But it cannot be denied that the

[1] Rem., i. pp. 1, 13, and 27.

contrast between the "lads" and the old men "on the edge of the grave" whom they were rebuking, is an effective touch worthy of the stage. Its only fault is that it is not true.

Mr. Froude's next sentences are an excellent example of his method. Here is the remainder of our sample page:—

"Religion had been introduced into the house through another singular figure, John Orr, the schoolmaster of Hoddam, who was also by trade a shoemaker. Schoolmastering in those days fell to persons of clever irregular habits, who took to it from taste partly, and also because other forms of business did not answer with them. Orr was a man of strong pious tendencies, but was given to drink. He would disappear for weeks into pothouses, and then come back to his friends shattered and remorseful. He, too, was a friend and visitor at Brownknowe, teaching the boys by day, sleeping in the room with (them at night). . . ."

In the sentence immediately following he tells how Orr taught the Bible to James Carlyle, and it became "the guiding principle of his life."

There is something so piquant in this description of "religion" being "introduced" into the house of James Carlyle's father by such a peculiar missionary as the tippling yet devout shoemaker-schoolmaster that readers may be sorry to know it is fictitious. Yet the "Reminiscences" place this beyond doubt (vol. i. pp. 14–40). John Orr was James Carlyle's "sole teacher in 'schooling,'" that was all. Arithmetic is the only thing he is expressly mentioned as speaking of, at the farmhouse. He taught reading and writing "with other limited *practical* etceteras," and that he also perhaps spoke of religion may be inferred (vol. i. pp. 14, 29, 32).

That he taught the Bible to James Carlyle, and that

he thereby furnished James Carlyle with "the guiding principle of his life," is a pure invention. In fact, it is very instructive to compare Carlyle's own cautiously exact statements on this topic with Mr. Froude's statements. Mr. Froude apparently conceived James Carlyle as a formal prig, who, having learned a creed from his tippling teacher, thereupon converted his brother and rebuked the old men. The truth was widely different. Old Thomas Carlyle himself, his grandson tells us, "had a certain religiousness; but it could not be made dominant and paramount: his life lay in two; I figure him as very miserable, and pardon (as my Father did) all his irregularities and unreasons. . . ." His sons had to "trust for upbringing to Nature, to the scanty precepts of their poor Mother, and to what seeds or influences of culture were hanging as it were in the *atmosphere* of their environment. . . . I suppose, good precepts were not wanting; there was the Bible to read. Old John Orr, the Schoolmaster, used from time to time to lodge with them; he was religious and enthusiastic (though in practice irregular—with drink); in my Grandfather also there seems to have been a certain geniality. . . ." Then, having mentioned how James Carlyle rebuked the reading of the "Arabian Nights," his son says: "By one means or another at an early age, he (James Carlyle) had acquired *principles;* lights that not only flickered but shone steadily to guide his way. . . . Happily he had been enabled very soon, in this choice of the False and Present against the True and Future, to 'choose the better part.' Happily there still existed in Annandale an Influence of Goodness, pure emblems of a Religion: there were yet men living from whom a youth of earnestness might learn by example how to become a man. Old Robert Brand, my Father's maternal uncle, was probably of very great influence on him in this

respect: old Robert was a rigorous Religionist, thoroughly filled with a celestial Philosophy of this earthly Life, which shone impressively through his stout decisive, and somewhat cross-grained deeds and words. Sharp sayings of his are still recollected there; not unworthy of preserving. He was a man of iron firmness, a just man and of wise insight. I think my Father, consciously and unconsciously, may have learned more from this than from any other individual. . . ."

That to this house with the genial father, with a "certain religiousness," the good mother and rigorously religious uncle, "religion" could in any sense of the words have been "introduced" by John Orr, the reader sees to be absurd, though the mention of John Orr after the allusion to the Bible enables us to see what suggested the fiction to Mr. Froude, who could not resist the temptation to make a readable paragraph, without considering too curiously whether it was true or not. In pages 7 and 8 Mr. Froude mentions Robert Brand too, and in a characteristic manner misrepresents him. "Rigorous Religionist" Carlyle called him. He is a "*vigorous* religionist" teaching doctrines in Froude's book, as if the pious old Scotchman had been like a Salvation Army ranter!

There is another thing worth notice in this connection. William Brown, a mason from Peebles, who came down into Annandale to do some work, married the eldest daughter and child of old Thomas Carlyle. Mr. Froude (page 6) says he "took her brothers as apprentices," but makes no allusion whatever to his *moral* influence on the young family of high-spirited boys. Carlyle, however, gratefully says of him: "This worthy man . . . proved the greatest blessing to that household; my Father could in any case have saved himself; of the other Brothers it may be doubted whether William Brown was not the

primary preserver. They all learned to be Masons from him, or from one another. . . ." This flings new and important light on the youth and early manhood of Carlyle's father; but we must stick closely to our page, for if we go any further beyond the errors in page 5 only, readers will lose all patience. The second of the sentences last quoted from page 5, about schoolmastering falling to persons of clever irregular habits, needs to have *sometimes* interpolated in it to make it accurate; and the first sentence states as a certainty that John Orr was also a shoemaker, whereas Carlyle indicates he was not quite sure of that; but these are small matters in such a book.

Thus readers can see even in a single page how much Mr. Froude "was overpowered by his imaginative art," as Mr. Conway expresses it, and may even be able to guess from it how he "could not resist a picturesque situation or a dramatic surprise." The page was chosen at random, and seems a fair specimen of Mr. Froude's method. Multiply these errors by 1860, and then consider seriously what such a book is worth.

CHAPTER XIII

AN OLD LOVE-STORY RETOLD—MISS WELSH'S APPRENTICESHIP

FOR a sample of the mistakes in the general outline of Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," it is not at all needful to take up another of his four volumes. We might choose almost *any* chapter. Let us choose an early part of his narrative,—a part which shows how well he remembered the shrewd advice he received from an experienced publisher to please the ladies'-maids.

"Miss Welsh," he says, "had as many suitors as Penelope. They were elegible, many of them, in point of worldly station. Some afterwards distinguished themselves. She amused herself with them, but listened favourably to none, being protected perhaps by a secret attachment, which had grown up unconsciously between herself and her tutor . . . Edward Irving." But alas! "there were difficulties in the way . . ." (i. pp. 126, 127). When Irving fell in love with the charming Miss Welsh and found his love returned, he was already betrothed to Miss Martin of Kirkcaldy, and Miss Martin cruelly refused to release him from his engagement. Then the magnanimous and high-born heroine of the romance, with noble unselfishness, made him wed his betrothed, but how could she *ever* forget him?

Carlyle was Irving's friend, introduced to her by Irving. With the intuition of genius she early saw Carlyle's high gifts and married him, after she lost Irving, because she "was romantic; and to assist and

further the advance of a man of extraordinary genius, who was kept back from rising by outward circumstances, was not without attraction to her." (i. p. 182). He was not in love with her, however, nor she with him. So we are assured again and again. Ah, no! the aching void in her heart was never filled!

Truly this is a pretty tale; but in telling it Mr. Froude mixes up a grain of fact with a bushel of fiction, in perhaps the most audacious manner ever attempted in any narrative not expressly fictitious.

Mr. Froude passes over in silent contempt Carlyle's account of his wife's early lovers. After reading Miss Jewsbury's narrative, "In memoriam Jane Welsh Carlyle," and seeing much there about early lovers, Carlyle touched upon the subject and remarked: "The most serious-looking of these affairs, was that of George Rennie, the Junior (not Heir but *Cadet*) of *Phantassie*, Nephew of the first Engineer Rennie; a clever, decisive, very ambitious, but quite *un*melodious young fellow; whom we knew afterwards here," &c. . . .[1]

So complete was Mr. Froude's contempt for this statement, that though Mr. Rennie was mentioned in vol. ii. of his biography as a visitor, and though Mrs. Carlyle alludes to him and his sister, in a letter Mr. Froude there quotes (p. 463), as "the most intimate friends I ever had in East Lothian," her native locality, still Mr. Froude makes no allusion to the fact that George Rennie had once been a lover of the young Miss Welsh.

A volume of the "Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle" has been admirably edited by Mr. D. G. Ritchie, now Professor of Logic at St. Andrews. In his preface he alludes to the "pleasing light in which, on the whole, they show both Carlyle and his wife; and in saying this,"

[1] Rem., i. p. 70.

he adds, "I would call attention to the fact, that all the letters to Eliza Stodart are printed *without omissions*." This makes his volume very valuable evidence, the more so because it soon becomes clear to the reader that Eliza Stodart was an intimate friend, deemed worthy of such unbounded confidence as an affectionate girl can give to a girl she loves.

The most interesting passages in these letters relate to George Rennie, and conclusively show that Carlyle had been *rightly* informed by his wife that George Rennie's courtship was the most serious of her early "affairs," as she loved to call them.

He was "faithless," she said, or she was whimsical—it would be unsafe to blame him without more evidence than her letters. But what are we to think of Mr. Froude's story when we read these passages, in one and the same letter from Miss Welsh to Miss Stodart, dated Haddington, 3rd March 1822, when she was nearly twenty-one years of age?

The first alludes to Mr. Rennie, who had gone abroad.

"One night when it was very stormy, I lay awake till four o'clock in the morning, thinking on the perils of such a night at sea. . . .

"What dreadful weather this is! The very elements seem to have leagued with *that Wretch* against me; for it is impossible to hear such winds and not to *think* of him. God grant he may not be drowned! and that he may return to Scotland alive! Were he dead, you know I should forget his *faults;* and that—that would be dreadful. Could I ever forget *his faults?* He might then indeed have the *glory* of having made the proudest heart in Britain *break*. But do not—for mercy's sake do not '*pity*' me. I would almost as soon that people *should hate* as *pity* me. And shall I not be revenged?

My revenge shall be great as his fault is great, and noble as his fault is base. . . ."

There is more about Mr. Rennie, but let this suffice. The next passage alludes to the Rev. Edward Irving:—

"Mr. Irving is making a horrible noise in London, where he has got a church. He tells me, in his last, that his head is quite turned with the admiration he has received; and really I believe him."

There is no evidence whatever that Mr. Froude ever received any confidential information from Mrs. Carlyle. She had discussed the subject of her early lovers with Miss Jewsbury; but although Miss Jewsbury suggested much of Mr. Froude's fiction, even she is innocent of any responsibility for this part of it. Mr. Froude's fine fancy had little to work upon but the facts which Miss Jewsbury tells in this quiet way.

"I don't know at what period she knew Irving, but he loved her, and wrote letters and poetry (very true and touching): but there had been some vague understanding with another person, not a definite engagement, and she insisted that he must keep to it and not go back from what had once been spoken. There had been just then some trial, and a great scandal about a Scotch minister who had broken an engagement of marriage: and she could not bear that the shadow of any similar reproach should be cast on him. *Whether if she had cared for him very much she could or would have insisted on such punctilious honour, she did not know herself;* but anyhow that is what she did."[1]

Mrs. Oliphant, reporting her talks with Mrs. Carlyle about Irving, makes some shrewd remarks well worth quoting:—

"There were some points about which she was naturally and gracefully reticent—about her own love, and

[1] Rem., i. 61, 62. The italics are not Miss Jewsbury's.

the preference which gradually swept Irving out of her girlish fancy if he had ever been fully established there, a point on which she left her hearer in doubt. But there was another sentiment gradually developed in the tale which gave the said hearer a gleam of amusement unintended by the narrator, one of those side-lights of self-revelation which even the keenest and clearest intelligence lets slip—which was her perfectly genuine feminine dislike of the woman who replaced her in Irving's life. . . . This dislike looked to me nothing more than the very natural and almost universal feminine objection to the woman who has consoled even a rejected lover. The only wonder was that she did not herself . . . see the humour of it."[1]

The most interesting thing about the George Rennie episode is that Carlyle's knowledge of it showed how fully his wife had taken him into her confidence. From her letters to her bosom friend, Miss Stodart, it appears that she outgrew her affection for Mr. Rennie, as people do in real life though not in romantic novels. Long afterwards, when living in London, she again wrote about him to the same friend:—

"I am incapable of cherishing resentment, even against a faithless lover. I heard he was there. I wondered what he was like. I sent him my address. He came instantaneously with his sister Margaret. Bess, did I feel awkward? To be sure I did, and looked awkward, for I was within an ace of fainting, and he looked like one of his own marbles. But neither of us, I believe, entertained a particle of tenderness for the other; nevertheless, it was mere queeziness from the intense sensation of the flight of time, which such a meeting occasioned one." She then alluded to Mr. Rennie's wife and her kindred, "a perfect fool—the whole kin of them are

[1] *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. xliii. p. 490.

fools," &c., &c. These words remind one of the allusions to Mrs. Irving that amused Mrs. Oliphant, and render doubly probable Mrs. Oliphant's conjecture that Carlyle's harsh allusions in the "Reminiscences" to Mrs. Irving's kindred were merely a repetition of his wife's conversation. As for Mr. Rennie himself, Mrs. Carlyle in this letter to Miss Stodart said: "He is still self-willed and vain enough to show me as often as I see him that I made an escape."[1]

But within two years she wrote again to the same friend, and referred with genuine feeling to her happiness when she sat "under a hay-stack in a summer's day with Bess and George Rennie."[2] This tends to corroborate what Carlyle wrote, that she "respected various qualities in" Mr. Rennie, "and naturally had some peculiar interest in him to the last." When he died, Carlyle says, "My poor Jane hurried to his House; and was there for three days, zealously assisting the Widow."[3]

This is interesting, but it is really shocking to the romantic imagination to notice how soon it was (within a year is a pretty safe guess) after her "affair" with George Rennie was ended, that she had a love-correspondence with Irving; and I fear the romantic novel-reader must lose all interest in this young woman on learning that Carlyle "cut out" Irving in an ordinary commonplace way.

The evidence on this subject leaves no room for doubt. Professor Norton thus reports the result of his perusal of letters which he has *not* published. The Rev. Edward Irving's courtship of Miss Welsh, was, wrote Professor Norton, "an affair discreditable to Irving, and for a time it brought much suffering to Miss Welsh. Mr. Froude is aware that the telling of such a private

[1] "Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle," pp. 268, 270.
[2] Ibid., pp. 276, 277. [3] Rem., i. p. 70.

experience requires excuse, and he justifies it by the following plea: 'I should not unveil a story so sacred in itself, and in which the public have no concern, merely to amuse their curiosity; but Mrs. Carlyle's character was profoundly affected by this early disappointment, and cannot be understood without a knowledge of it. Carlyle himself, though acquainted generally with the circumstances, never realised completely the intensity of the feeling which had been crushed' (*Life*, i. 156).

"Both of these alleged grounds of excuse are contradicted by the evidence of the letters of Miss Welsh and of Carlyle. Her letters show that her feelings for Irving, first controlled by principle and honour, soon underwent a very natural change. Her love for him was the passion of an ardent and inexperienced girl, twenty or twenty-one years old, whose character was undeveloped, and who had but an imperfect understanding of the capacities and demands of her own nature." (Character "undeveloped" is doubtless true, but Professor Ritchie's book of her "Early Letters" had not been published when Professor Norton wrote. If it had, one doubts whether the adjective "inexperienced" would not have been modified.) Professor Norton proceeds: "In the years that followed upon this incident she made rapid progress in self-knowledge and in the knowledge of others, chiefly through Carlyle's influence, and she came to a more just estimate of Irving's character than she originally had formed. Irving's letters to her, his career in London, his published writings, revealed to her clear discernment his essential weakness,—his vanity, his mawkish sentimentality, his self-deception, his extravagance verging to cant in matters of religion. The contrast between his nature and Carlyle's did 'affect her profoundly,' and her temporary passion for Irving was

succeeded by a far deeper and healthier love. 'What an idiot I was for ever thinking that man so estimable,' she wrote in May 1824. 'My standard of men is immensely improved,' she said in a letter in September of the same year."[1]

Thus the old, old story is told again, and the expulsive power of a new affection illustrated once more. Poor Irving! No doubt he *was* unreasonable. But "when did ever man in love listen unto reason?" Since we must agree with Professor Norton, and have no excuse for denying that, as Irving was already betrothed, his love-making was discreditable to him, it is pleasant to remember also a graceful little incident that Mrs. Carlyle many years afterwards told to Mrs. Oliphant.

Irving, "with natural generosity, introduced some of his friends" and Carlyle in particular to Mrs. Welsh and her daughter. "But the generosity of the most liberal stops somewhere. When Irving heard the praises of one of those same friends falling too warmly from the young lady's lips, he could not conceal a little pique and mortification which escaped in spite of him. When this little ebullition was over, the fair culprit turned to leave the room; but had scarcely passed the door when Irving hurried after her, and called, entreating her to return for a moment. When she came back, she found the simple-hearted giant standing penitent to make his confession. 'The truth is, I was piqued,' said Irving; 'I have always been accustomed to fancy that *I* stood highest in your good opinion, and I was jealous to hear you praise another man. I am sorry for what I said just now—that is the truth of it.'"[2]

"Self-deception," "extravagance verging to cant,"

[1] "Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle," ii. 368, 369.
[2] Mrs. Oliphant's "Life of Edward Irving," chap. v. p. 44.

yes, yes; but, with all his faults, Irving was a manly man, and Miss Welsh by no means *very* inexperienced. She did not let him deceive himself about her feelings, and his continued friendship with both her and Carlyle was surely noble amends for anything discreditable in what he did when influenced by sentiments somewhat difficult to control.

CHAPTER XIV

THOMAS CARLYLE'S APPRENTICESHIP IN LOVE

MRS. CARLYLE was ready to speak to intimate friends about her own early experiences in love-making, but it was never safe for any one to allude to Margaret Gordon in *her* hearing.

Professor Masson was surprised to find that Carlyle himself, however, was not reluctant to speak of that fair lady. Without giving names, he told the old story to his friend, and in the "Reminiscences" he jotted it down.[1]

Carlyle was about twenty-one years of age when he first saw Miss Gordon, "fair-complexioned, softly elegant, softly grave, witty and comely," living "cheery though with dim outlooks" with her aunt, a childless widow lady at Kirkcaldy, when Carlyle went there as schoolmaster.

"She had a good deal of gracefulness, intelligence, and other talent. . . . Her *accent* was prettily English, and her voice very fine," as Carlyle still remembered after half a century.

Mr. Strachey and some others have published some reminiscences of Carlyle, explaining in particular his relations with the Strachey family. All who study Carlyle's life must be grateful for these. More such

[1] See the "Reminiscences," ii. 57, 58, 59; and also D. Masson's "Edinburgh Sketches and Memories," pp. 257, &c.

reminiscences may perhaps be yet hoped for. But, while thankfully accepting the facts stated concerning a man of world-wide importance, we have to scrutinise conclusions and conjectures based upon only some of the known facts and not in harmony with all. Accordingly, the Strachey family tradition that "Kitty Kirkpatrick" was the "Blumine" of "Sartor Resartus" seems questionable, or more than questionable. A few suggestions for external circumstances were all that were derived from that part of Carlyle's actual experience.

There was much esteem and friendship but never any serious love-making between young Carlyle and Miss Kirkpatrick. Letters and other documents prove this beyond all doubt. The suspicion of the sweet Miss Kitty as a possible rival slightly alarmed Miss Welsh for a while; but *very* little would suffice for that. Carlyle seems to have been quite blameless and steadfast to his Jane, to whom indeed he was engaged to be married before he ever saw Miss Kitty. Mr. Froude's narrative probably contributed to mislead Mr. Strachey, and make him attach undue importance to trivial coincidences.

There is no room for doubt that the only episode in Carlyle's own life which much resembled Teufelsdröckh's experience was the romantic love between him and Margaret Gordon.

Teufelsdröckh is a fictitious character whose sentiments resembled Carlyle's a little, but only a little, more than Dr. Faust's resembled Goethe's. Indeed Teufelsdröckh seems more like Faust than Carlyle. He is a *wiser* Faust—one who reads better than the famous doctor the Sphinx-riddle of life.

Blumine, too, is expressly fictitious. We must remember that the first reader of "Sartor Resartus" was

Mrs. Carlyle. That explains fully Blumine's "gifts," "graces," and "*caprices*," her "*light* yet so stately form," her "*dark* eyes," and "those *dark* tresses, shading a face where smiles and sunlight played over earnest deeps." Nay, many expressions in that charming chapter of "Sartor" seem reminiscences of the love-letters that passed between Carlyle and his "dearly beloved Jane."

Indeed it is more likely that the conventional romantic imagination may find it agreeable to suppose that the passion experienced by the Teufelsdröckh of fiction resembled Carlyle's love for Miss Welsh as much as his love for Miss Gordon. It often happens, as Shakespeare knew, that an earnest man loving a second time may love more warmly than before.

If this view is correct, Teufelsdröckh's disappointment was partly a reminiscence of Carlyle's loss of Margaret Gordon, but partly also an anticipation of what his feelings would have been if he had lost Miss Welsh too. Teufelsdröckh's attitude to women after the catastrophe is not unlike what Carlyle told his saucy Jane would be his, if she did not wed him.

However this may be, it is certain that, when writing "Sartor Resartus" at Craigenputtock, Carlyle would have endangered his domestic peace if any other figure than his Jane's had been recognisable in Blumine. The resemblance goes deeper than the mere details, many of which are common to her and Miss Kirkpatrick. For instance, Mrs. Carlyle loved roses and cultivated them at Craigenputtock. She was as much of a "Rose-Goddess" therefore as Miss Kirkpatrick.[1] In character no less than in figure and complexion, &c., Blumine much resembled Miss Welsh as she *was*, and perhaps

[1] Many more details might be quoted, if a narrative could be written without regard to brevity. *E.g.* cp. "Reminiscences," i. p. 147, &c.

still more closely Miss Welsh as she and her husband and lover thought she was. Such are the extremities to which even a gifted writer may be driven, if his "dearly beloved" is of a jealous turn of mind. Mrs. Carlyle always was so—an indubitable fact, however difficult to reconcile with Mr. Froude's story.

There is no possible room for doubt, however, that before he ever saw Miss Welsh, Carlyle was in love with Miss Gordon and found his love returned; but "economic and other circumstances," meaning his inadequate income and indifferent social position, made her and her aunt terminate the acquaintance. The aunt, once a Miss Gordon herself, was "the Duenna Cousin," "in whose meagre, hunger-bitten philosophy, the religion of young hearts was, from the first, faintly approved of," perhaps scarcely suspected. She was, Carlyle remembered long afterwards, "childless, with limited resources, but of frugal cultivated turn; a lean, proud, elderly dame"; but she "sang Scotch songs beautifully, and talked shrewd *Aberdeenish* in accent and otherwise,"—never *too* polite, it may be feared, to the somewhat awkward tall young man, whose conversation must have often entertained and sometimes surprised her. He took no offence at her airs toward the schoolmaster, and she perhaps fancied that *her intellect* attracted his homage, before she discovered where the attraction was.

So the months passed, "twelve or fifteen months." Then the aunt saw how matters were drifting and acted —with decision. The woman who hesitates is lost; and Miss Gordon's *aunt* did not hesitate. She left Kirkcaldy, taking her niece with her, and Miss Gordon wrote the loving adieu which Mr. Froude has printed.

That letter was probably an after-thought on her part, an attempt to excuse herself. The "Reminiscences"

closely resemble "Sartor" in describing the actual adieu. In both cases, the cause of the parting was the same (economic circumstances), and the manner of it very similar. The only difference is that the story as told in "Sartor Resartus" was, naturally, more explicit.

"Speak to her," wrote Carlyle in the "Reminiscences," "since the '*Good-bye, then*' at Kirkcaldy . . . I never did or could."

Compare with this the conclusion of Teufelsdröckh's romance.

"'One morning, he found his Morning-star all dimmed and dusky red; the fair creature was silent, absent, she seemed to have been weeping. Alas, no longer a Morning-star, but a troublous skyey Portent, announcing that the Doomsday had dawned! She said, in a tremulous voice, They were to meet no more.' The thunder-struck Air-sailor is not wanting to himself in this dread hour: but what avails it? We omit the passionate expostulations, entreaties, indignations, since all was vain, and not even an explanation was conceded him; and hasten to the catastrophe. '"*Farewell, then*, Madam!" said he, not without sternness, for his stung pride helped him. She put her hand in his, she looked in his face, tears started to her eyes; in wild audacity he clasped her to his bosom; their lips were joined, their two souls, like two dew-drops, rushed into one,—for the first time, and for the last!' Thus was Teufelsdröckh made immortal by a kiss. And then? Why, then—'thick curtains of Night rushed over his soul, as rose the immeasurable Crash of Doom; and through the ruins as of a shivered Universe was he falling, falling, towards the Abyss.'"

No wonder Carlyle also soon left Kirkcaldy; but, like the true nobleman of Nature that he was, he made no attempt to persevere with his suit. All the

ladies who ever knew him agreed that he was one of the most chivalrous men of modern times. It was not lack of passion that restrained him. On the contrary, it took him "perhaps some three years" to compose himself, and then he also could say "adieu" in his heart.

It was characteristic of him that, in love as in religion, he was in earnest, and never "sentimental." Professor Masson is clearly right (as against Mr. Froude) in saying that "his clear intellect had cut down like a knife between him and the theology from which he had parted, leaving no ragged ends. . . . He was not involved in the coil of those ordinary 'doubts' and 'backward hesitations' of which we hear so much . . . in feebler biographies."

Even so in love, too, he could recognise plain facts, however disagreeable, and when Thomas Carlyle first saw Miss Welsh's bright face, about three years after he left Kirkcaldy, his heart was *not* preoccupied. Long before then he had seen Margaret Gordon for the *last* time, so far as he cared. He had, in deference to her wishes, made no attempt to write to her,[1] and was ceasing to think of her. After they parted, he never spoke to her again. As a French lady expressed it, he was "a dangerous man to *trifle* with,"—a man who, if he fell in love once more, would be terribly in earnest.

There is a curious coincidence well worth notice. It was about three years after he parted from his first love that he met Miss Welsh, and he remarked in his "Reminiscences" that Margaret Gordon hung in his fancy "for perhaps some three years . . . on the usual romantic, or latterly quite elegiac and silent terms." His poetical

[1] She refused to give her address in saying adieu; but Carlyle's friend Irving knew her in Glasgow, and could have supplied her address if Carlyle had asked for it.

adieu to her seems to have been written soon after he met Miss Welsh; so it may have been that, like Romeo in Shakespeare's tragedy, though less precipitate, he found the best remedy for one passion in another. It is assuredly the most effectual—an unfailing remedy, and indeed the only "specific" worth mention in such cases.

Though he never spoke to Margaret Gordon again, he *saw* her twice more than twenty years afterwards. I quote from the "Reminiscences," inserting, duly marked, some words taken from another account he gave. She had become "the 'Dowager Lady ——,' her Mr. Something having got knighted before dying." "Bannerman" was her name, Masson tells us.

"I saw her, recognisably to me, here in her London time (1840 or so), *twice*, once with her maid in Piccadilly, promenading, little altered; a second time that same year or next, on horseback both of us, and *meeting* in the gate of Hyde Park." . . . '*She was bending a little, tapping her boot in the stirrup with her riding whip, when she looked up and saw me*,' and "her *eyes* (but that was all) said to me almost touchingly, 'Yes, yes, that is you!' Enough of that old matter . . . now quite extinct."

"Though he talked," says Professor Masson, "prettily and tenderly on the subject, the impression left was that the whole thing had become 'objective' to him, a mere dream of the past. But fifty years had then elapsed since those Kirkcaldy days when Margaret Gordon and he were first together."

"Fifty years" is a long time in the life of a man. Much changes and becomes extinct in fifty years; yet even in his old age he thought worthy of preservation the tender "Adieu" which he probably hummed to himself in lonely walks round Edinburgh,—an "Adieu"

worth reading yet, full of earnest, passionate sincerity, coming straight from the heart of a man who had loved and lost.

"Let time and chance combine, combine,
Let time and chance combine;
The fairest love from heaven above,
That love of yours was mine,
My dear,
That love of yours was mine.

"The past is fled and gone, and gone,
The past is fled and gone;
If nought but pain to me remain,
I'll fare in memory on,
My dear,
I'll fare in memory on.

"The saddest tears must fall, must fall,
The saddest tears must fall;
In weal or woe, in this world below,
I love you ever and all,
My dear,
I love you ever and all.

"A long road full of pain, of pain,
A long road full of pain;
One soul, one heart, sworn ne'er to part,—
We ne'er can meet again,
My dear,
We ne'er can meet again.

"Hard fate will not allow, allow,
Hard fate will not allow;
We blessed were as the angels are,—
Adieu for ever now,
My dear,
Adieu for ever now."

CHAPTER XV

AN OLD LOVE-STORY RETOLD

1821–22

IN studying the records of Miss Welsh's love affairs, one notices with surprise that Irving must have had rather a short innings. Carlyle made a favourable first impression. Miss Welsh wrote an interesting letter to Miss Stodart soon after Carlyle was introduced to her. It is dated by Professor Ritchie "the end of 1821 or beginning of 1822," and shows that her heart was still sore for George Rennie. Indeed it ends with a malediction on him. This however did not prevent her discussing half-a-dozen other lovers, James Aitken, Robert McTurk, James Baird, Robby Angus, Craig Buchanan, Thomas Carlyle. The list is not exhaustive. Irving is named along with Carlyle and others in her later letters. She asked her "dear Bess's" opinion about Mr. Craig Buchanan in particular, as he was likely to propose soon, and Thomas Carlyle was the only other seriously discussed. He was compared to her ideal of a lover, Rousseau's St. Preux, and found satisfactory in everything but elegance. That defect, she intimated, was unpardonable; but the emphatic, earnest praise she gave him in this letter, and her comparison of him to her ideal lover, so early in their acquaintance, in a letter to an intimate lady friend, prove that Mr. Froude was wrong in saying she was merely "amused to see" him "at her feet," and that "his birth and position seemed to secure her against the possibility of any closer connection" (i. 181). Professor

Norton assures us that her letters to Carlyle also disprove these statements of Mr. Froude.[1] She took a lively interest in Carlyle from the first, but he had to wait.

Irving, perhaps also some others but Irving certainly, intervened between George Rennie and Thomas Carlyle; but Carlyle lost no time and knew his own mind, and even in 1822 he aimed at winning Miss Welsh with the singleness of purpose that marked him throughout his life.

Perhaps the most ludicrous of all Mr. Froude's mistakes has only recently been completely disproved by the publication of a letter which Carlyle wrote in that year. That Carlyle was not in love with Miss Welsh is an essential part of Mr. Froude's story. "He thought of a wife," says Mr. Froude, "as a companion to himself who would make life easier and brighter to him. . . . He loved her in a certain sense; but, like her, he was not *in love*. . . . He admired Miss Welsh. . . . Her mind and temper suited him" (i. 285, 286).

As a matter of fact the lady had many infirmities of temper, and how well Carlyle saw that her temper would suit him, a letter he wrote on 23rd March 1822, to console a friend who had been disappointed in love, may be quoted to show:—

(*To D. Hope, Esq., Glasgow*).

"3 Moray Street, Leith Walk,
23rd March, 1822.

". . . Various thoughts strike me on considering that business. . . . As for the loss itself I am not sure that you have much cause for regret, when all is reckoned up. The young lady's conduct I can find an explanation if not an excuse for, and the evidence of testimony forces me to believe that her general demeanour displayed many graceful qualities. But she was a person of genius, if I

[1] Early Letters, ii. p. 373.

mistake not; and much as I admire, not to say idolize, that characteristic in a mistress (or *sweetheart*, as we call it), I confess I should pause before recommending it to any honest man in a wife. These women of genius, sir, are the very d——l, when you take them on a wrong tack. I know very well, that I myself—if ever I marry, which seems possible at best—am to have one of them for my helpmate; and I expect nothing but that our life will be the most turbulent, incongruous thing on earth—a mixture of honey and wormwood, the sweetest and the bitterest—or, as it were, at one time the clearest sunshiny weather in nature, then whirlwinds and sleet and frost; the thunder and lightning and furious storms—all mingled together into the same season—and the sunshine always in the *smallest* quantity! Judge how you would have relished this: and sing with a cheerful heart, '*E'en let the bonny lass gang!*'"[1]

Apart from the love-letters, it would be difficult to find better proof than this letter furnishes that Carlyle married as he himself indicated, because he was in love, and *not* as a result of the calculation imputed to him by Mr. Froude that "her mind and temper suited him."

Carlyle waited, or rather *persevered*. Irving was soon superseded as director of her studies, and the little scene at Edinburgh showed that he apprehended that he was being supplanted as a lover too. The likeliest date for that scene is 1822, and it may have been another half-unconscious ebullition of pique, such as he apologised for then, that made him write to Miss Welsh on 9th September of that year:—

"The next moment I have unemployed I devote to my friend Carlyle, to whom I have not yet found time

[1] Unpublished Letters of Carlyle, *Scribner's Magazine*, April 1893, p. 419.

to write. Oh that God would give rest to his mind, and instruct him in his truth. I meditate a work upon the alienation of clever men from their Maker."[1]

Carlyle knew all about Irving's rivalry, but not till 1825, long after it ended. The end must have been near in September 1822, for Irving complains in the letter last quoted that Miss Welsh had "discharged" him "from preaching to" her. Irving was married to Miss Martin in October 1823, and long before then Miss Welsh and Carlyle were on an intimate footing.

During 1822 Carlyle's progress is an edifying proof of the advantage, in love as in war, of knowing one's own mind. True, Miss Welsh repressed "those importunities of which I have so often had cause to complain."[2] What did that matter, so long as she did not terminate the acquaintance? "My dear Madam" of 30th April 1822 became "My dear Friend" before the end of May. In that month Miss Welsh and her mother visited Edinburgh and left it, as Carlyle complained in his letter of 27th May 1822, "without communicating that event to so important a person as myself." A vain man would have grumbled. Carlyle intent on the practical was wisely content merely to write so as to minimise the chance of being ignored again. "It were unprofitable," he wrote, "not to say absurd, to make any kind of outcry about this occurrence now; and very absurd to charge you with any blame in the matter: another time, however, I hope for better fortune." "I have little leisure for writing to-day," he proceeds, but nevertheless the remainder of the letter occupies six pages of print, ending "ever yours," and followed by a postscript beginning, "I am already too late for the Coach."

[1] Mr. Froude's T. C., 1795–1835, i. p. 160.

[2] See Norton's "Early Letters of T. C.," 2 vols., for this and subsequent quotations.

Miss Welsh did not persist in repressing importunities. On the contrary, we find him writing on 16th December 1822:—

"My dear Friend,—If you do not grow more cross with me soon, I shall become an entire fool. When I get one of those charming kind letters it puts me into such a humour as you cannot conceive: I read it over till I can almost say it by heart; then sit brooding in a delicious idleness, or go wandering about in solitary places, dreaming over things—which never can be more than dreams."

"He on his part," says Mr. Froude, speaking of this time and perhaps thinking of these words, "regarded her as the most perfect of women, beyond his practical hopes" (i. 173). This is merely Mr. Froude's interpretation of the reverence which a man in love feels for the woman he adores, and the grateful wonder, as at a thing too good to be true, which fills his mind on discovering that his love is returned. "Beyond his practical hopes!" says the prosaic biographer, and yet in this same epistle, "My dear Friend" became "My dear and honoured Jane," and here endeth that letter, of which it seems likely that Mr. Froude read no more than the opening sentences. Let us read the conclusion. Miss Welsh, we may be sure, did not fail to do so.

"Now *do* not be long in writing to me. If you knew how much your letters charm me, you would not grudge your labour. Write to me without reserve—about *all* that you care for—not minding what you say or how you say it. Related as we are, dulness itself is often best of all, for it shows that we are friends and put confidence in one another. What an impudent knave I am to ask this of you, to affect to be on such terms with you! It is your own kind way of treating me that causes it. I have often upbraided fortune; but here I ought to call her

the best of patronesses. How many men, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unbind, have travelled through the world and found no noble soul to care for them! While I—God bless you, my dear Jane!—if I could deserve to be so treated by you, I should be happy. Now you *must* not grow angry at me. Write, write!—I am 'hungering and thirsting' to hear of you and all connected with you.—I am ever yours,

THOMAS CARLYLE."

Nine days later he wrote again:—

"By the Belfast Town and Country Almanack, Spring will be here in a month. Perhaps you think to steal away again without seeing me: but try it—! To be sure, it is only the brief space of a year since we met, for about five minutes; and we have so many hundred centuries to live on Earth together—I confess I am very unreasonable."

The good-natured all-round tolerance of a man in love whose love is returned appears in the next paragraph of that letter:—

"But why should I keep prating? The night is run, my pen is worn to the stump" (*N.B.*—The letter occupies 9½ pages in print); "and certain male and female Milliners in this street are regaling themselves with *Auld Langsyne*, and punch and other viler liquors, and calling back my thoughts too fast from those elysian flights to the vulgar prose of this poor world. May Heaven be the comforter of these poor Milliners! Their noise and jollity might call forth anathemas from a cynic: my prayer for them is that they may never want a sausage or two and a goose better or worse and a drop of 'blue ruin' to keep their Christmas with; and whatever quantities of tape and beeswax and diluted tea their several necessities require."

CHAPTER XVI

AN OLD LOVE-STORY RETOLD

1823

WHAT so experienced a young lady as Miss Welsh thought fit to reply to such letters as she was receiving about the end of 1822 from Thomas Carlyle might be considered liable to discount by hostile critics, so what she wrote to her confidante, Miss Stodart, may be more acceptable. On March 31st, 1823, she wrote her a long letter, in which she mentioned Thomas Carlyle:—

"Often at the end of the week my spirits and my industry begin to flag; but then comes one of Mr. Carlyle's brilliant letters, that inspires me with new resolution, and brightens all my hopes and prospects with the golden hues of his own imagination. He is a very Phœnix of a Friend!"[1]

This letter is as remarkable for what is *not* in it as for what is in it. Of lovers except Carlyle and one other there is no mention. The other exception is an *ex*-lover who is not named, but George Rennie's name occurs in a postscript, and Professor Ritchie reasonably conjectures that the unnamed one was he. Whoever it was, Miss Welsh makes the significant intimation—"I am going to forget him immediately." The rest of the letter is a quiet record of home life and local gossip. She gives a lively account of a beggar-boy of

[1] Quotations in this chapter are from Professor Ritchie's volume, Norton's "Early Letters," vol. ii., and Mr. Froude's T. C., vol. i.

genius she had tried to help,—"My ideas of talent are so associated with everything great and noble"; and tells of a little eight-year-old "Irish packman with a broken back," who sold tape and needles and was interesting to her. There are one or two sarcastic sentences about various persons, but the letter is quite good-natured and ends with some details ascertained from her mirror: "I have got a fine head of hair lately; altogether I am looking rather more captivating than usual. I pray Venus it may last till I get to town." That Carlyle was in Edinburgh then and expecting to see her soon need scarcely be added.

During these months Miss Welsh's correspondence with Carlyle was becoming more and more affectionate, and even Mr. Froude admits that Carlyle's "spare moments were occupied in writing letters to Miss Welsh or correcting his (brother's) exercises" (i. 175). Spare moments indeed! He had many spare hours, and when he was not working or writing he was thinking of her, and told her so.

In May 1823 she signed herself, "Your affectionate friend at all times and everywhere"; and her evident anxiety regarding his health about this time was an excellent omen. On 1st July he wrote to her:—

"I am fast losing any little health I was possessed of: some days I suffer as much pain as would drive about three Lake poets down to Tartarus; but I have long been trained in a sterner school; besides by nature I am of the *cat* genus, and like every cat, I have nine lives. I shall not die therefore, but unless I take some prudent resolution, I shall do worse. . . .

"Never mind me, my good Jane: allow me to fight with the paltry evils of my lot as best I may; and if I cannot beat them down, let me go to the Devil, as in right I should."

But *why* should such an excellent young man suffer without sympathy? It might comfort him a little to know her gratitude for all he had done for her. "It is a pity," she wrote in July 1823, "there is no other language of gratitude than what is in everybody's mouth. I am sure the gratitude I feel towards you is not in everybody's heart."

Gratitude is a very noble feeling, very. But such extreme gratitude on the part of a young lady twenty-two years of age towards an unmarried gentleman five and a half years older, combined with her solicitude regarding his health, prepare us for a letter she wrote to him on August 19, 1823, dating her letter *Hell*, meaning however only her grandfather's house at Templand:—

"I owe you much; feelings and sentiments that ennoble my character, that give dignity, interest, and enjoyment to my life—in return I can only love you, and *that* I do from the bottom of my heart."

Mr. Froude does not cite these words, but describes them thus:—

"She expressed a gratitude for Carlyle's affection for her, more warm than she had ever expressed before" (i. 181, 182).

There is no doubt about the warmth certainly. If Carlyle had only had more conceit and self-confidence and taken her at her word, she would probably have acquiesced in the letter being considered a promise to wed. But his bilious dyspepsia was worse than usual just then, and his worldly prospects seemed needlessly dismal in consequence. So while he replied warmly and tenderly, he concluded a beautifully affectionate letter in a most provoking manner:—

"Think of me"—Can any lady guess, what she was to think? "Think of me, sweet! when alone," sang

Byron boldly; but on this occasion Carlyle wrote in Byron's *other* manner:—

"Think of me as one that will live and die to do you service; whose good-will, if his good deeds cannot, may perhaps deserve some gratitude, but whom it is dangerous and useless to love."

What answer *could* a self-respecting young lady make to that? Miss Welsh was equal to the occasion. She said in effect that she loved him—she "found the expression a rash one," but it was true. Oh, yes, she loved him. But if he were her brother, she would love him in the same way. His "truest most devoted friend" she would be while she "breathed the breath of life." But his wife, never—no, never, under any circumstances.

To this the natural man might have answered that he had *not asked* her to be his wife, and explosions and confusion might have followed. But as the poet sings—

> "It is not so much the gallant who woos,
> As the gallant's *way* of wooing";

even so in love-letters, it is not so much what the lover may write, as the lover's *way* of writing. Carlyle's way is well worth the study of any unfortunate young man in love with a woman of genius.

"I honour your wisdom and decision. You have put our concerns *on the very footing where I wished them to stand.* Thus, then, it stands: you love me as a sister, and will not wed; I love you in all possible senses of the word, and will not wed any more than you. Does this reassure you?"

"*Love you in all possible senses of the word*" was enough to satisfy any woman. Miss Welsh *was* reassured, *quite* reassured, and in her very next letter she wrote, "My happiness is incomplete while you do not

share it. . . . Stripped of the veil of poetry which your imagination spreads around me, I am so undeserving of your love! But I *shall* deserve it—*shall* be a noble woman if efforts of mine can make me so."

Carlyle did not run the risk of receiving another declaration of sisterly affection. On September 18, 1823, he wrote to her:—

"I was looking out, while there, in the valley of Milk" (one of the prettiest parts of Annandale) "for some cottage among trees, beside the still waters; some bright little place, with a stable behind it, a garden, and a rood of green—where I might fairly commence housekeeping, and the writing of books! They laughed at me, and said it was a joke. Well! I swear it is a lovely world this, after all. What a pity that we had not *five* score years and ten of it!"

This passage is well worth noting, for this was Carlyle's dream of married life, not unlike William Wordsworth's actual life. It was the utmost he had to offer Miss Welsh just then. So long as it hovered in the distance she apparently made no objection; but it led to a notable debate between the lovers when it came 'within measurable distance' of practice.

Mr. Froude half scornfully says, "Miss Welsh was romantic," and he turns to discuss her business letters to a lawyer, who, by the way, seems to have been a stranger, not a friend. We all know how completely young ladies take such gentlemen into their confidence about their love-affairs! Miss Welsh merely told her lawyer that her marriage "was *possible*," and in view of it directed certain deeds to be prepared. It comforts Mr. Froude to reflect she said no more than "possible." He dwells on the word, as if he had himself been one of the discarded lovers; but he feels it is poor comfort after all, and he reports progress about the end of 1823 in reluc-

tant measured terms, as if he were discussing the ravages of a mortal disease:—

"*Miss Welsh was beginning to contemplate the possibility*" of "*taking charge of such a person*" as Thomas Carlyle (i. 204).

Was ever such a thing so put before? Pity the difficulties of a poor man of letters who wishes to tell a romantic story in one way when all the evidence points to another.

CHAPTER XVII

AN OLD LOVE-STORY RETOLD

1824–25

IN telling the story of Carlyle's love-making, Mr. Froude lays great emphasis on Carlyle's violent temper. What he says about it is nearly all fabrication; but if he had wished to prove that the lady had a hot temper, he could have had no difficulty. Indeed he quotes a "note of penitence" she sent her lover expressing contrition for tormenting him when they met in Edinburgh, early in 1824. Miss Welsh declared in effect that she must have been possessed of a devil when she did it. The phrase stuck in Mr. Froude's memory, and reappeared later in his book, but it was attributed to Carlyle.[1] This is quite in Mr. Froude's way, but it is a trifle not worth dwelling upon.

His immediate object in quoting the "note of penitence" was perhaps to assist the reader to believe the sentence immediately following:—"There was no engagement between them, and under the existing circumstances there was to be none; but &c. &c." The date of this is about March 1824.

In a sense it is true that there was no engagement. Miss Welsh's instructions to her lawyer did not mention the preparation of a deed of agreement to marry. No day had been fixed for their wedding, and only confidential friends knew of the matter. But even if we

[1] Cp. Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795-1835, i. 209, and ii. 472.

put aside the love-letters, because "Miss Welsh was romantic," there is evidence quite apart from them that in 1824 Miss Welsh and Thomas Carlyle were engaged to be married exactly as Miss Martin and Irving were, when Miss Martin refused to release Irving, *i.e.* there was an engagement indefinite only as to time, a mutual promise to wait for each other and wed when possible,—a common thing in Scotland, perhaps more common *then* than now.

Professor Ritchie prints a letter which for valid reasons he dates 1824. The day and month are 18th April. Miss Welsh wrote it to Miss Stodart, and "My Sweetest Coz," "my *dear, dear angel Bessie*" was requested to do her "two tremendous favours." The first was to return a book to the lodgings of *Dr.* Carlyle (Carlyle's brother). The other was to "be so very kind as order for me at Gibson and Craig's one of the best gentlemen's hats, of the most fashionable cut, *not* broad-rimmed. . . . It is to be a present to my intended husband; so do see that they send a *Jemmy* one" ("*i.e.* spruce, dandyish," notes the learned editor). In this letter there is an unmistakable reference to Carlyle as "*Mr. Thomas*," and it is amusing to observe Miss Welsh's emphasis of disgust at the negligence of some friend who had delayed too long in giving *Mr. Thomas* an introduction he wished to a Mr. Gillies.

About the end of May 1824, Carlyle visited Haddington to take leave of Miss Welsh before going to London. Let us hope that Miss Stodart had executed her commission faithfully, and that a handsome or "jemmy" hat, "of the most fashionable cut, *not* broadrimmed" was ready. "A few happy days were spent at Haddington," admits Mr. Froude. Carlyle never forgot those few days. Forty-two years afterwards, when bereft of her, he still remembered the "*gimp bonnet*

she wore, and her anxious silent thoughts, and my own, mutually legible both of them, in part,—my own little Darling, now at rest, and far away!"

Either then or before then she told him that she had made her will, leaving him Craigenputtock in fee simple. There was no reason to fear that *he* would mistake the meaning of that action, but his biographer strangely did.

"It was a generous act," says Mr. Froude, "which showed how far she had seen into his character and the future. . . . But it would have been happier for her and for him if she could have seen a little further, and had persevered in her refusal to add her person to her fortune" (i. 183).

Mr. Froude's indignation if he had known of the "jemmy" hat as well would have been too deep for words. The truth is that he clearly mistook the meaning of the bequest of Craigenputtock by overlooking the fact, for which we have Carlyle's own authority, that Miss Welsh told him of it in 1824. It was merely her characteristic way of emphasising by *actions* rather than by words her acceptance of Carlyle.[1]

It is clear enough that Carlyle so understood her. Soon after he went to London his tutorship in the Buller family ended. Dyspepsia continued to keep its hold on him. Looking back in his old age to his sufferings from dyspepsia in his early years, he considered very justly that it "perhaps needed only a *wise* doctor" (to prescribe diet and regimen instead of drugs, it may be supposed); "but I must not complain of it either," piously added the wise old man; "it was not wholly a *curse*, as I can sometimes recognise, but perhaps a thing needed, and partly a *blessing*, though a stern one, and bitter to flesh and

[1] "Reminiscences," i. 123. The words used point to a verbal communication. Compare that passage with Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795–1835, i. 260: "There had been no occasion for her to tell," &c.

blood."[1] At all events, he decided to renounce for the time the career of literary ambition in the metropolis, and seek health in the country. His first step, he tells us, was to offer "to let my Dearest be free of me, and of any virtual engagement she might think there was; but she would not hear of it, not of that, the Noble Soul; but stood resolved to share my dark lot along with me, be (it) what it might."[2]

The correspondence here referred to has been completely misunderstood by Mr. Froude. The key to it is that Carlyle's plan included *marriage at an early date.* He objected to a long indefinite engagement, and wished to wed as soon as possible.

It must be remembered, (1) that he had wooed for more than two years, and was in the thirtieth year of his age; and (2) that he had saved a considerable sum of money and might reasonably expect to be able to support his wife even at the start very nearly as well as her mother had ever lived, with a good prospect of improvement in the future.

Mr. Froude's guess (i. 259, 260) that Carlyle possibly calculated on his wife's income is due to his supposing that Carlyle did *not* know in 1824 how the Craigenputtock estate had been disposed of; and as for Mr. Froude's suggestion that Miss Welsh's "romantic" idea was to improve Carlyle's "outward circumstances" by marrying him, a little reflection on a few indisputable facts is enough to show that it is absurd. Miss Welsh, in view of her marriage, as she herself intimated, had given her mother the life-rent of Craigenputtock, and did not receive any money from her small estate till 1842, more than fifteen years after her marriage. Till then Carlyle had to maintain his wife, as other men without private

[1] "Early Letters of T. C.," ii. p. 114, footnote.
[2] Rem., ii. 168.

means have to do, by working for her; and during all that time his marriage, however helpful to him otherwise, was, as he clearly foresaw it would be, in all pecuniary respects an additional embarrassment.

Another thing to be remembered in considering whether Carlyle was reasonable in wishing to wed soon is that an indefinite engagement in Scotland is often very long, and sometimes lasts for twenty years or more. Many instances might be mentioned of the twenty years being exceeded.

Among Miss Welsh's contemporaries, living in Edinburgh at the date of this correspondence, there was a lady still memorable, Baroness Nairne, once the "Flower of Strathearn," sweetest of all Scotch singers except Robert Burns. She was married at forty years of age to a dashing young bridegroom of forty-nine, after an engagement lasting about fourteen years.[1] Miss Welsh would, or thought she would, have been content to wait in that way, but it is instructive to notice that Carlyle would have none of it.

Mr. Froude moralises like a village gossip, and does his best to hold up to the scorn of all this reprobate man of genius, who was impatient of the kind of engagement which Miss Welsh preferred, and which a Yankee poet hit off well as a

> "Kind of engagement, you see,
> That's binding on you, but not binding on me,"

and can be protracted indefinitely. A *lady* may be truly in love, and yet, like the Baroness Nairne or Miss Welsh, be willing to wait in this way. It is also possible for many *men*, who

> "In the catalogue" must "go for men;
> As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
> Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves are clept
> All by the name of dogs."

[1] David Masson's "Edinburgh Sketches and Memories," p. 127.

But to Carlyle it was not possible to wait so, and the sustained energy in work and the patient thrift he continued to practise were visibly inspired by the hope of winning his "dear and honoured Jane." Those who impute his fiery impatience to him as a fault may abandon the attempt to understand his character.

The letters that passed between the lovers while they debated this matter are instructive and amusing; even Mr. Froude's heart-broken commentary is delicious in its absurdity; but the farce of the thing and the earnest wisdom in Carlyle's letters must not make us overlook the shameful trick that Mr. Froude played on this illustrious pair of lovers.

It was a *shame* to print any of the love-letters at all. It was a still more scandalous shame to give these particular letters such disproportionate prominence, and, worst of all, not only omit to quote but actually misrepresent the warm, loving letters that passed before and after them.

Only by so doing, however, could Mr. Froude hope to win even temporary credence for the strange story he chose to tell. Let us now look candidly at these letters. Since he has printed (i. 269–291) and has *not* understood them, let them be explained.

One other remark may be made to prevent disappointment. This part of the correspondence between Carlyle and Miss Welsh is essentially similar to controversies between commonplace lovers. The arguments on both sides might nearly all be paraphrased by quotations from popular songs. In their love-making, as in other people's, there was not any room for what is called originality. How could there be? Love-making is at once the most interesting and the most commonplace thing in the world.

CHAPTER XVIII

NOW OR NEVER

Thomas Carlyle to Miss Welsh.

(London) *Jan.* 9, 1825.

IN reply to an inquiry as to what he had decided to do, he said she must decide. "I have somewhat to propose to you which it may require all your love of me to make you look upon with favour. . . ."

His proposal was to send his brother Alexander to rent Craigenputtock at once, to proceed there himself and arrange it, and fit everything for her immediate reception as his wife. "Will you go with me? Will you be my own for ever?"

His health forbade a literary life, along with an existence "pent up in noisome streets, amid feverish excitements," a mode of life which seemed to him wholesome for nobody. He wished to return to a natural life in the country.

She also was unhappy, and what she needed was practical occupation. "You have a heart and an intellect and a resolute decision which might make you the model of wives."

She knew what money he had. "In my present state my income, though small, might to reasonable wishes be sufficient; were my health and faculties restored, it *might* become abundant. Shall I confess to you this is a difficulty which we are apt to overrate? The essentials of even elegant comfort are not difficult to procure. It is only vanity that is insatiable in consuming. To my

taste cleanliness and order are far beyond gilding and grandeur, which without them is an abomination; and for displays, for festivals, and parties, I believe you are as indisposed as myself. . . . What is it to us whether this or that Squire or Bailie be richer or poorer than we?"

In conclusion he bade her tell everything to her mother, and take her mother's advice. "Judge if I wait your answer with impatience."

It may be remembered that such a quiet country life of study and literary work, with Jane beside him, had been Carlyle's dream ever since she confessed she loved him. It was what seemed to him the best practicable plan if they were to wed soon.

Seeing he was in earnest now, she set herself to make him give up that plan, and the correspondence that ensued shows us once more the advantage of knowing one's own mind.

In her first reply to his proposal for marriage at an early date, Miss Welsh explained that her previous mention of Craigenputtock was a joke, and considerately informed him that she was not in love with him. She loved him, and confessed to admiration, affection, sympathy, but he was not to suppose she would do whatever *he* liked. She was not in love to that extent, and had to advise him to—get a *settled* income. Partly out of vanity, but chiefly to torment him for his inconvenient importunity, this proud daughter of a country doctor wrote: "Apply . . . your talents, to gild over the inequality of our births."

(*N.B.*—Mr. Froude took her *quite* seriously, and gravely tells how she visited Carlyle's father's farm at Mainhill this year, and saw "with her own eyes the realities of life" on a Scotch farm, as if she had been a princess visiting the slums; the fact being that both Miss Welsh's grandfathers, whom she often visited, were farmers, living within a day's ride of Mainhill.)

"Then," wrote Miss Welsh, *i.e.* when he had gilded over the inequality of their births by gaining a settled income satisfactory to her, "then we will talk of marrying"; but fearing she had gone too far she hastened to add, "I will marry no one else." So you see you are held to your engagement, young man, and as for fixing a time, never ask me to do it, I object—on *principle;* or, to quote her own words:—

"A positive engagement to marry a certain person at a certain time, at all haps and hazards, I have always considered the most ridiculous thing on earth."

You need not attempt further argument. "My decisions, when I do decide, are unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Write instantly, and tell me that you are content to leave the event to time and destiny, and in the meanwhile to continue my friend and guardian which you have so long faithfully been, and *nothing more.*"

Then, lest this might be too strong, for ladies are *above* logic, she added, with as many qualifications as she could think of, that she could not be happy without him, and that he might but she never would change the terms on which they had lived, *i.e.* break the indefinite engagement.

This letter has the appearance of a joint composition. At all events it doubtless expressed a compromise which Miss Welsh effected with her mother, whom Carlyle had desired her to consult.

Carlyle replied that his decision was also fixed. "The maxims you proceed by are those of common and acknowledged prudence," he said, and that was true. Mr. Froude seems to fancy, indeed later in his work he *says*, "The unheard of *mésalliance* had been the scoff of Edinburgh society."[1] But it is the historical fact that the "mésalliance" *was* "unheard of" in Edinburgh society, and so was Miss Welsh, until after she married

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834-1881, ii. 297.

Carlyle. Miss Welsh, as she herself said, was afraid of "the censures of my acquaintance," *i.e.* relatives and Haddington gossips chiefly, and Carlyle said she was not to be blamed if she did "pay deference to the criticisms of others." But she must make her choice. He repeated what he had offered her.

"There was nothing in it of the love and cottage theory." . . . "How then? Would I incite a generous spirit out of affluence and respectability to share with me obscurity and poverty? Not so. In a few months I might be realising from literature and other kindred exertions the means of keeping *poverty* at a safe distance. The elements of real comfort, which in your vocabulary and mine, I think, has much the same meaning, might be at my disposal. . . ."

He, in effect, asked her to think it over and concluded:—

"If we must part, let us part in tenderness and go forth upon our several paths lost to the future, but in possession of the past."

Or, in other words, "You *have* to decide, my own dear love, to take me—or leave me—*now!*" Or, in the words of Burns—

> "Thou'rt ay sae free informing me,
> Thou hast nae mind to marry;
> I'll be as free informing thee,
> Nae time hae I to tarry."

In reply, he received an immediate assurance that she had really been thinking of their "mutual happiness," not of her own exclusively. She was the most indulgent of lovers, she protested: "What, then, have you to be hurt or angry at?"

The rest of her letter is a most charming and womanly *evasion* of the question, and an ingenious plea, that she was not quite in love with him just yet, but that "in a

year or two perhaps" the "only" destiny for her would be to be his wife. "Wait just a little while—just a year or two—won't you?" is the meaning of that letter.

This was hopeful, though still a little vague, but no one can wonder that at last, perceiving he would have her decision in plain terms, she told him that, far from giving him up, she "would marry him to-morrow rather."

She revenged her defeat, if such a termination to such a debate can be called a defeat, by plentiful mockery. It is amusing to read, but it is still more amusing to observe how Mr. Froude, though he called it "mockery," could only understand it *literally*. He praises Miss Welsh's "strong sense," and gives us a remarkable proof of his own lack of sense by insisting that Carlyle had seriously purposed to become himself a practical farmer, and had proposed that Miss Welsh should become the "mistress of a Scotch farm." It soon becomes apparent that, though Mr. Froude had in his possession for several years Carlyle's contemporaneous letters to his brother Alexander, he never read them carefully.[1] Even the letters he prints show clearly Carlyle's true intentions.

Carlyle had indeed written to Miss Welsh, in November 1824, that the life of a practical farmer, combining open air labour with literary work, would be the best for his health, but even in saying this he regretted "that nothing half so likely to save me comes within the circuit of my capabilities."[2] What he saw to be practical and did propose was—such a life as they afterwards lived at Craigenputtock. His brother "Alick" was to work the farm, and Carlyle to work at literature.

After Miss Welsh consented to wed soon, it pleased her lively fancy to tease her lover, and take great credit

[1] See, *e.g.*, "Early Letters of T. C.," ii. p. 298, for the work Carlyle was to do when "farming."

[2] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795–1835, i. pp. 261, 262.

to herself for disabusing his mind of Utopian plans. Here is a specimen of the "strong sense" which awakened Mr. Froude's admiration of this noble woman,—really a noble woman, but not in the least like what he imagined her.

"Prune and delve will you?" wrote she, referring to Craigenputtock. "In the first place there is nothing to prune: and for delving, I set too high a value on your life to let you engage in so perilous an enterprise. Were you to attempt such a thing, there are twenty chances to one that you would be swallowed up in the moss, spade and all. In short, I presume, whatever may be your *farming* talents, you are not an accomplished cattle-drover. . . ."[1]

"Strong sense," said Mr. Froude; and, to show the versatility of his inventive genius, he explained to us that Miss Welsh knew better than Carlyle "what was really implied in" the work of a farmer's wife; and then our gay biographer, in the chapters immediately following, quite forgot what he had written, and described how Miss Welsh had afterwards to visit Mainhill to see "with her own eyes the realities of life" on a Scotch farm![2]

Both statements cannot be true, and neither is worth much. Carlyle probably knew what a farmer's wife had to do quite as well as Miss Welsh, and she visited Mainhill to see her lover and make the acquaintance of his family, and for no other reason. Her own expression was that she came to pay his mother a visit. She stayed above a week, "happy, as was very evident, and making happy." She spent much of her time riding about the country with "Mr. Thomas," the weather being fine. She was studying the "realities of life in a small Scotch farm," according to the wonderful Mr. Froude!

[1] Mr. Froude's "T. C.," 1795–1835, i. p. 290.
[2] Cp. ibid., pp. 276 and 313.

CHAPTER XIX

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

NOTHING now remained for the lovers to do but to settle their place of residence, and make the other necessary arrangements preliminary to marriage. In discussing these preliminaries, Carlyle as was natural enough was good humoured and indulgent,[1] quite willing for example to agree to a house on the outskirts of Edinburgh instead of in the country, willing in fact to agree to almost anything except indefinite delay. Mr. Froude describes him as selfish and inconsiderate throughout, but succeeds in making his story seem plausible by methods which no reader now needs to hear explained. There is a certain monotony even in his variety, and it must suffice to say that the only possible question—"Was it lying spite or mere fixed idea on Froude's part?"—may be answered in his favour. When possessed by a fixed idea, Mr. Froude can seldom deviate into fact.

Omitting in the meantime the other details of the pretty story of the wooing of Miss Welsh, let us take Professor Norton's report of the only bit of the history of 1825 which was disagreeable to the lovers:—

"Mr. Froude gives a long abstract of a letter of Mrs. Montagu's the date of which, omitted by him, was 3rd July 1825, urging Miss Welsh not to marry Carlyle if she retained her old feeling for Irving, now married for some years, and he says: 'With characteristic integ-

[1] "Early Letters of T. C.," ii. pp. 376-381.

rity, Miss Welsh on receiving this letter instantly enclosed it to Carlyle' (i. 306). This is an error. Writing to Carlyle some days after receiving it, Miss Welsh says: 'I had two sheets from Mrs. Montagu the other day, trying to prove to me that I knew nothing at all of my own heart. Mercy, how romantic she is!' In a later letter (undated, but post-marked 20th July) Mrs. Montagu urged her not to conceal from Carlyle the feeling she had once had for Irving, and this letter Miss Welsh instantly sent him, accompanying it with the declaration that she had 'once passionately loved Irving,' and that she had no excuse, 'none at least that would bear a moment's scrutiny,' for having concealed the truth. 'Woe to me then, if your reason be my judge and not your love!' 'Never were you so dear as at this moment when I am in danger of losing your affection, or what is still more precious to me, your respect.'

"In his abstract of this letter Mr. Froude inserts . . ."[1] what was not in it—no matter what. It is enough to know the unquestionable fact that Carlyle soothed and comforted his little woman, and scarcely gave a thought to the matter. It also seems likely that the little woman never quite forgave Mrs. Montagu.

Professor Norton makes another remark worth quoting. "He (Mr. Froude) says that he alludes to the subject only because Mrs. Carlyle 'said afterwards that but for the unconscious action of a comparative stranger her engagement with Carlyle would probably never have been carried out' (i. 304, note). If Mrs. Carlyle ever used these words, her fancy, her memory, or her temper would seem at the moment to have played her false. The evidence afforded by her letters is ample, is convincing that Mrs. Montagu's action did not affect the result."

[1] "Early Letters of T. C.," ii. pp. 370, 371.

Of course Mrs. Montagu's action did not affect the result. But what is worth notice is Professor Norton's "*if*." There is much in an "if"; and this particular "if" suggests a general observation. When we find that Mr. Froude habitually fails to write down accurately what he reads, and sets himself with the MSS. before him to quote and abridge, it is difficult to believe without corroboration that he reports accurately after many years what he heard in casual conversation. Professor Norton's "*if* Mrs. Carlyle ever used these words" is very significant, and the same doubt must more or less apply to every similar verbal utterance which Mr. Froude reports.

Among such dubious speeches there is one requiring special notice. It may seem incredible but it is the fact that Mr. Froude, after quoting the letters Miss Welsh wrote, when seeking to change her lover's purpose of marriage at an early date, concludes his sorrowful commentary by quoting, as if he were reluctantly divulging the secret of the whole matter, some words which he alleges Mrs. Carlyle said, "in the late evening of her laborious life": "'I married for ambition. Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him —and I am miserable'" (i. p. 291).

If Mrs. Carlyle was not making merry at the expense of some sentimental person—a thing she loved to do—it is impossible to understand why she ever said she "married for ambition." It was certainly not true. The statement, whoever made it, is so extremely absurd as to be scarcely worth discussing.

If her arguments against Carlyle's plan of early marriage prove that she married him for ambition, what are we to infer from the fact that when her arguments failed to convince him, she would not release him from the "virtual engagement," but said at once she would "marry no one else," and ended by declaring she could

not give him up but "would marry him to-morrow rather?"

She indeed said in these letters that she loved and admired and esteemed and sympathised with him but was not in love with him. She said so, and Mr. Froude intimates that we must believe this to be true. What are we then to think of the passionate protestations of her love that abound both in earlier and in later letters? A few months later she was writing, "I am yours, oh that you knew how wholly yours."[1] Not to Carlyle alone, but to others she spoke of her whole-hearted devotion to him. Even Mr. Froude prints a letter she wrote to an aunt before her marriage to the same effect (i. pp. 356–358). Our choice therefore is not between believing Miss Welsh or believing any other person. Our choice is, which of her statements are we to believe? It is surely reasonable to choose the alternative that harmonised with her actions, and to discount the statements that were made perhaps in part to torment him, and certainly with the hope of making him change his plans; and that were made, too, at a time when she was secure of his affection and could feel she might say what she liked.

The story of the early wedded life of the Carlyles has also, as we shall see, been wrongly told, in nearly every part, by Mr. Froude, but it is true that Carlyle's reasonable expectations as to income from literature were disappointed, and that Mrs. Carlyle was an admirably thrifty housewife. Though for many years she had less to spend than either she or her lover anticipated when they decided to wed, much less indeed than he had been able to earn in the years immediately preceding their marriage, she never reproached him for that, but loyally stood by him and helped him. She never "nagged"

[1] "Early letters of T. C.," ii. p. 373.

him at all about money matters, seeing he was doing his best, nor did she ever, so far as can be discovered, remind him that it was he who had been in a hurry, or urge him to forsake his high purpose for the sake of money. The epitaph that he placed upon her grave was a simple statement of the truth. "For forty years she was the true and ever-loving helpmate of her husband, and by act and word unweariedly forwarded him, as none else could, in all of worthy, that he did or attempted." This was her noblest achievement as a wife—the noblest possible to any woman; but let any true woman consider which of the two hypotheses is the more likely, Mr. Froude's, that she was sustained by a "stern and powerful sense of duty" holding her true "through a long and trying life . . . to the course of elevated action" which she had set before herself; *or*, the matter-of-fact conclusion to which, as we have seen, the evidence points, that she *was in love* with Thomas Carlyle. Her "stern and powerful sense of duty" and all else that was good in the life of this most womanly woman were as the flowers and fruits of a noble nature, of which the root was a devoted and unchanging love.

There may be some who hesitate to discount Miss Welsh's statement, early in 1825, that she was not in love, and prefer to discount her warm protestations before and after then, to the contrary. It may reassure such doubters to point out that Carlyle himself did not hesitate for a moment as to what to believe; but he did not forget, or let her forget all at once, her saucy declarations that she was not in love with him. Here is an extract from his reply to the first letter she wrote him after their marriage; the date is 19th April 1827, about six months after the wedding. He had gone to Dumfries on business.

"Not unlike what the drop of water from Lazarus's

finger might have been to Dives in the flame, was my dearest Goody's letter to her Husband yesterday afternoon. . . . No, I do not love you in the least; only a little *sympathy* and *admiration*, and a certain *esteem*; nothing more!—O my dear, best, wee woman!—But I will not say a word of all this, till I whisper it in your ear with my arms round you."[1]

It seems almost sinful to transcribe these words. It is like *eavesdropping* when lovers meet. That Mr. Froude rendered it necessary for Professor Norton to print them is the severest possible condemnation of Mr. Froude. Necessary it certainly was; and with these words this old love-story might fitly end, for no one can read them and doubt that Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh were in love with each other, if ever any man and woman were.

"But George Rennie was her first love," a sentimental reader may object, "Froude was wrong about the man, but the fact was as he says, for how could she be *in love* again? 'There's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream!' Besides," such a critic might add, if such a critic ever looked into evidence, "did she not deceive even Carlyle, much as she did tell him? Did he not say she *never loved* Rennie?"

Facts, however, must be recognised, however hard to fit into any theory. It is certain, demonstrated by irresistible evidence, that Miss Welsh loved Rennie first, and then Irving, and then ceased to love either, and fell wholly in love with Carlyle. It is equally intelligible to all experienced adult persons that she may, in perfect sincerity, telling Carlyle everything without reserve, have so spoken of Rennie that Carlyle supposed she had never really loved him. To no man or woman of adult intellect can any of these facts seem strange or inexplicable. But for the

[1] "Letters of T. C.," i. pp. 54,

sake of the youths and maidens some words of explanation may be added to conclude this story.

There can be nothing in the world more exasperating to an earnest maid or youth, when conscious of a sentiment that swallows up all other sentiments and thoughts—

"As the old Hebrew walking-stick ate up its neighbours,"

than to hear this irresistible sentiment sneered at as *calf-love*. The very word is enough to inspire a high-spirited youth with thoughts of homicide, and to make a sweet maiden, especially if somewhat idle, take refuge in sentimental poetry and thoughts of suicide. Nevertheless there is a certain half-truth in the word, well worthy of the serious meditation of both maid and youth; though it is also true that cruel adults often use it without any more serious intention than inspired my favourite monkey when he pulled the cat's tail.

The half-truth is that the first sentiment of love is a *new thing* to the inexperienced adolescent mind, and so it seems more important than it is. Suppose an ordinary child burns his finger. The pain overwhelms him, and he thinks of nothing else, but merely howls in agony quite infinite for the moment. The same child, grown to manhood, might burn his finger even more severely and feel more pain, and yet, whatever profanity (or adult howling) he might indulge in, he would be apt to resent the patting on the back and the soothing words of comfort that were welcome to the child. The man would be quite aware that a burnt finger was, after all, only—a burnt finger.

The first passion of love may be the strongest—happy are they who find it so. But also, it may not; happy then are they who are still at liberty and can change. In this lies the wisdom of a certain delay.

The solemn sacrament of marriage is in truth—whatever the palaver of "sky-pilots" with their dreamy ridiculous incantations may have driven foolish persons to suppose—the most solemn of all human sacraments or oaths. It is a *life*-contract, a solemn promise on both sides to *change no more at all.*

The breach of this solemn life-contract is not punished among us to-day as severely as it was by our Teutonic forefathers, before they ever heard of the religions made in Judea. The sanction of it is in the hearts of men and women; and when we have cleared altogether from our minds the hallucinations of superstition we merely see all the better that a life-contract in such a matter is the only one permissible, the only one compatible with self-respect. It can be kept, too, even if a mistake is made. But, oh, the misery of a *mistake!* Mrs. Carlyle always had a "peculiar interest" in George Rennie, but she was very thankful that she escaped marrying him. Such facts are common in real life, and those who are in earnest should learn to face the facts. Let youths and maidens think of this. They may be sure that if the calf-love *is* to be their final one, it can endure to wait till in manhood and womanhood they are able to face the world together, and hand in hand take oath to change no more, and then—never think of changing.

CHAPTER XX

MR. FROUDE AS AN EDITOR

WHY Mr. Froude blundered so much in writing his "Thomas Carlyle," it would be difficult in brief space to explain better than by pointing to how he fulfilled his loving promises of care in the work he was to do as editor.

Good editing requires many high gifts, and also the humble indispensable qualification of diligence. In 1863 Mr. Froude received, he said, "high compliments" from Carlyle for the editing of *Fraser's Magazine*, and there is no doubt that *Fraser's Magazine* was then well edited. This circumstance misled Carlyle into entrusting to him the editing of the "Letters and Memorials," expressly on account of his "practicality," and without going into details, it may be said generally that much of the work Carlyle understood Mr. Froude was to do for him seems to have been editorial.

Mr. Froude's method of doing his editorial work gave rise to many controversies which it is not necessary to describe. The ascertained results are scarcely open to any controversy at all now, and may be briefly summed up thus.

Instead of doing the work he had solemnly undertaken, and carefully editing the "Reminiscences" and "Letters and Memorials" and such other unpublished papers as it seemed worth while to print, Mr. Froude took little or no trouble whatever about the fit editing of the "Reminiscences" and "Letters and Memorials,"

but concentrated all his energies on making a book of his own out of them and the other unpublished papers to which he had access. His whole procedure was like one long-continued breach of faith with those who had trusted him. Here are a few details.

Thomas Carlyle left explicit instructions as to the necessity for the omission of many passages in the "Reminiscences." There was nothing to hide, but much that was not suitable for publication. There was also much that, being merely a recollection of Mrs. Carlyle's talk, needed verification. Mrs. Oliphant has pointed out that this was especially true of the remarks about Mrs. Irving and Mrs. Montagu.

Carlyle's instructions were disobeyed. The principal omission, *e.g.* in the "Reminiscences" of Jane Welsh Carlyle, was that of a passage containing a solemn injunction against publishing "this bit of writing *as it stands here.*" To have published in the manner Carlyle directed would have necessitated the omission of "perhaps nine-tenths." As Professor Norton has pointed out in the preface to his edition of the "Reminiscences," Mr. Froude admits "that Mr. Carlyle gave his consent to the publication of the 'Reminiscences' on the condition that they should be printed with 'the requisite omissions.'" The trusted friend, executor, and editor did *not* make "the requisite omissions," and the consequence was that many innocent persons were cruelly hurt for no sufficient reason, and the memory of Thomas Carlyle suffers from the laziness or indiscretion of James Anthony Froude.

The "Letters and Memorials" were even more seriously defaced than the "Reminiscences." Mr. Froude added some original remarks to the "Letters and Memorials." One of these must suffice as a sample. It was selected for criticism by Mr. Venables, who wrote:—

"To a series of letters in 1843, which needed no explanation, a note is prefixed for the purpose of calling attention to a supposed instance of selfishness or neglect.

"'The house in Cheyne Row requiring paint and other readjustments, Carlyle had gone on a visit to Wales, leaving his wife to endure the confusion and superintend the workmen, alone with her maid.—J. A. F.'

"No sensible woman," comments Mr. Venables, "desires the presence of her husband when a small house is turned upside down by painters and carpenters.

"'You see,' says Mrs. Carlyle in her first letter to Carlyle in Wales, 'you do so hate commotion that this house gets no periodical cleanings like other people's, and one must make the most of your absence.'

"Neither husband nor wife foresaw that, forty years later, indignant moralists would revile his memory on the ground of an arrangement which suited them both, and which concerned and concerns no other human being."[1]

Again, the same shrewd critic said: "Mr. Froude discharges his *self-imposed duty of unreserved exposure* by carefully directing attention to an episode which occupies fewer than twelve pages out of twelve hundred of Mrs. Carlyle's published letters."

No one who knew Mr. Venables can be surprised to hear that this acute lawyer was right in saying that the duty of exposure undertaken by Mr. Froude was *self-imposed.* The significance of this fact is very great.

No executor, entrusted by a deceased gentleman with the duty of editing his wife's letters, has any excuse for imposing on himself the duty of making additional exposures, or for intercalating other letters for that purpose, as Mr. Froude intercalated Miss Jewsbury's letter to himself. From Mrs. Carlyle's private journal,

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, May 1883, p. 626.

he had no right to quote more than her husband had marked for quotation, and yet he confessed he did so.[1] As a matter of fact, when the whole truth is known, it will be seen that Carlyle himself was blameless. "Whatever record leap to light he never shall be shamed" could not be said with equal force of any other man. But even supposing Mr. Froude had been right in his view of the facts of Carlyle's life, he knew his *own* position, and it must be obvious that he failed to appreciate the correct limits of an editor's and an executor's functions.

His treatment of the love-letters in his biography, in bold defiance of written instructions, is a circumstance that must prevent us, whatever our anxiety to be impartial, from charitably supposing he erred in this matter through inadvertence. His whole course of procedure forbids us to suppose so.

Under Carlyle's will, Mr. Froude received the whole of the profits of the "Letters and Memorials," though it is not quite clear that Carlyle so intended. Apparently Carlyle never gave any thought to the pecuniary value of that work. Mr. Froude also obtained, by subsequent arrangement, £300 out of the profits of the "Reminiscences." This was surely adequate remuneration for doing an editor's work well. Nevertheless the one thing that can be urged, in mitigation of his faults, was his almost incredible haste to publish. It would be disagreeable to dwell on his reasons for haste. It is also unnecessary. The haste was obvious and undeniable, and in fairness must not be forgotten. This does not excuse such deliberate misdeeds as Mr. Venables indicated, but it helps to explain them, and it fully explains the inaccuracy and many other defects in his editorial work.

[1] See "Letters and Memorials of J. W. C.," ii. p. 254.

To show or even enumerate all these defects would be tiresome. The most serious were due to Mr. Froude's prejudices, and it would be easy to make out a plausible accusation against him of deliberately "cooking" the papers he published, and in particular editing Mrs. Carlyle's letters in such a way as to support his own particular theory. But after all, if he really *believed* his theory, he may have erred in this matter in perfect good faith.

Among the less serious defects is the fact that neither the "Reminiscences" nor the "Letters and Memorials" had an index; and as for errors of the press, readers who, in the sample page we examined, saw sixteen errors in a quotation of less than five lines, may not be surprised to learn that, for the two small volumes of "Reminiscences" alone, the lowest of several probable estimates of the number of errors of the press is above seventeen thousand. Professor Norton reports one hundred and thirty in the first five pages, "and these pages are not exceptional."[1]

Happily there were devoted relatives and other disciples and friends. Professor Norton was approved of by Carlyle himself as the editor of his Correspondence with Emerson, and, at the instance of Carlyle's niece and her husband, to whom belonged most of the papers Mr. Froude had obtained on loan from Carlyle or his niece, Professor Norton has reëdited the "Reminiscences" and also edited the Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle, and four volumes of Carlyle's private correspondence, to be followed by more.

Mr. Froude's edition of the "Reminiscences" is rapidly becoming a literary curiosity. It is not to be

[1] Four pages chosen at random in different parts contain 29 + 25 + 27 + 25, *i.e.* 106 errors, or an average of 26½ per page. This average for 671 pages gives 17,781. Professor Norton's average, 26, gives 17,446.

reprinted; and for smooth polish of appearance combined with thoroughly bad workmanship, it is not likely to be soon surpassed. Of the seventeen thousand errors of the press let us mention only two.

Sir Henry Taylor was one of the dearest of Carlyle's friends. In Mr. Froude's edition of the "Reminiscences," we are told Sir Henry was a man of "morbid vivacity" (vol. ii. p. 312). In Professor Norton's edition, we read that he was a man of "marked veracity" (vol. ii p. 278). Mr. Norton on noticing this in the manuscript at once wrote and told it to Sir Henry Taylor, who in warmly thanking him said he had never been able to understand how his old friend had called him a man of "morbid vivacity."

Most of the other errors of the press are like locusts —their chief significance is in their multitude; but there is one more error of painful significance. He prints (vol. ii. p. 94), "It broke her health for the next two or three years," by mistake for—"It broke her health, permanently, within the next two or three years."[1] The significance of this mistake is worth examination. It was the principal one of several mistakes which led Mr. Froude to enrich modern fiction with the pathetic figure of a New Griselda. Happily this tragedy is relieved by the almost comical absurdities of the author, and the reader's willing tears evaporate in smiles.

[1] Rem., i. p. 72.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MOURNING BRIDE

IMMEDIATELY after describing the wedding of the Carlyles, and telling how they arrived safely at Comley Bank to begin housekeeping, our skilful artist, alive to the effect of a contrast,—

> "As 'twere with a defeated joy,—
> With one auspicious and one drooping eye,
> With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
> In equal scale weighing delight and dole,"—

plunged at once into "regrets and speculations." "The victory was won, but, as of old in Aulis, not without a victim." In this new tragedy the victim was—the bride!

Then followed a series of inaccurate statements as to what she had to undergo, rising to a pathetic climax, which has touched the hearts of many ladies, though little has been said of it. "Mrs. Carlyle's life was entirely lonely, save so far as she had other friends. . . . The slightest noise or movement at night shattered his nervous system; therefore he required a bedroom to himself; thus from the first she saw little of him, and as time went on less and less. . . . ."

The truth was that Carlyle was a most domesticated man, and his wife saw not less but more of her husband than the average married lady. During her early married life she never complained, but rather boasted of the attentions she received from him. Her complaints were of much later date, and shall be discussed later.

The use of separate bedrooms, according to Mr. Froude, was adopted for Carlyle's sake. It is alleged against him as part of his neglect of his wife, and it is mentioned immediately after the wedding.

As a matter of fact, it was an arrangement adopted only occasionally even at Craigenputtock, and not at all for Carlyle's sake at any time, but for his wife's.[1] The arrangement became permanent and habitual on the suggestion of Mrs. Welsh, Carlyle's mother-in-law. The suggestion was made by her when she was visiting her daughter at Cheyne Row, and it was made *solely for the sake of Mrs. Carlyle's health.* Mrs. Carlyle suffered, or said she suffered, from sleeplessness far more than her husband did. Carlyle's health was never considered in the matter, and his wishes apparently never asked. It was taken for granted by Mrs. Carlyle that he would approve of whatever arrangement suited her best, and finding she liked a separate bedroom, she persevered in the use of it.

She did so, even when paying visits. This accidentally led a gentleman who was very closely related to Carlyle to ask him confidentially for an explanation, as the "separate bedroom" whim of the lady had caused in one instance much inconvenience. In this way it was that Carlyle happened to speak of the matter, and the true story now told is in harmony with what he said, completely corroborated by other evidence also.

An ex-servant of the Carlyles, who had never heard of this matter, describing merely what she saw and heard in this famous household, mentioned a thing which, though of little value as evidence on this point, may be added as an additional fact, pleasantly showing Carlyle as

[1] Statements of doctors attending Mrs. Carlyle, corroborated by the statements of a relative reporting Carlyle's words to himself, and further corroborated by ladies reporting Mrs. Carlyle's confidential talk.

he truly was. She was speaking of a time when Mrs. Carlyle was old but in tolerable health, not a time of sickness.

"Master used to open her bedroom door every morning as he came downstairs to breakfast, and say in gentle tones, 'How are you this morning, dear?' or 'How did you sleep, dear?'

"Once I was doing up her hair at the time, and she asked me how often she had been up during the night. I could not say. She told him she had counted *fifteen times*."

No corroboration of Mr. Froude's statement about the bedrooms can be anywhere discovered. It apparently was a fiction, founded on the bare fact that Carlyle and his wife for many years used separate bedrooms. That was the whole of Mr. Froude's knowledge, as of the knowledge of most other people.

The matter is one mention of which would never have been sanctioned by Carlyle, and may even be disapproved by those who communicated the truth to me. How much to tell was left to my discretion, and, since Mr. Froude told more than he knew, it seems quite necessary to disclose the truth.

CHAPTER XXII

MR. FROUDE *VERSUS* THOMAS CARLYLE ABOUT THE NEW GRISELDA

MR. FROUDE had found Carlyle somewhat difficult of access, "short and stern" to him when first introduced, and painfully candid when more friendly. To the end of their long friendship, there was little change in this respect. Not long before Carlyle died, and in reference to quite another matter than the *Cæsar* incident, Mr. Froude unreasonably complained about his hurt feelings, like a petted schoolboy. Thus it was natural for him to feel that Carlyle was harsh and unobservant. A more manly man would have felt otherwise; and certainly a more conscientious man, whatever he felt, would never have supposed, without clear evidence of the fact, that Carlyle was habitually harsh to his wife. That was what Mr. Froude did. That Carlyle ill-treated his wife seems to have been to Mr. Froude a thing certain, needing no investigation.

Then, again, he had observed that Mrs. Carlyle had been in delicate health all the time he knew her. His friend Miss Jewsbury, or as Mrs. Carlyle called her Miss Gooseberry, thought that the strain of the lonely life at Craigenputtock was the cause of Mrs. Carlyle's delicate health. Both Mr. Froude and Miss Jewsbury, being of a sentimental turn of mind and deficient in a sense of humour, were prone to take seriously many exaggerated statements that Mrs. Carlyle made in jest,

and neither of them knew the Carlyles till many years after the Carlyles had left Craigenputtock.

Thus it happened that Miss Jewsbury suggested and Mr. Froude adopted a highly original theory, which surprised nobody more than those who were most intimately acquainted with the truth. Assuredly it makes a thrilling narrative in his book. This circumstance perhaps rendered the ingenuous author a little reluctant to look closely into the matter; but those who are anxious to know the Carlyle of real life will find it well worth while to do so.

Describing the early married life of the Carlyles at Craigenputtock, he wrote :—

"Poor as they were, she had to work as a menial servant. She . . . with a weak frame withal which had never recovered the shock of her father's death—she after all was obliged to slave like the wife of her husband's friend Wightman, the hedger, and cook and wash and scour and mend shoes and clothes for many a weary year. Bravely she went through it all; and she would have gone through it cheerfully if she had been rewarded with ordinary gratitude. But if things were done rightly, Carlyle did not inquire who did them. . . ." (i. 366).

The story-teller gives the reins to his imagination in filling in the details of the tragic picture. Poor Mrs. Carlyle had (in Froude's story) to do a great deal more than a hedger's wife; for a hedger's wife has not such visitors as Lord Advocate Jeffrey, with wife, daughter, and maid; and Mrs. Carlyle had not only to entertain these visitors, but also to cook their dinner! Nay, she had occasionally to black grates, scour floors, and milk cows. Mr. Froude does not say she had to work in the fields, but his talk about "exposure" almost suggests that. With "damnable iteration" he

dwells upon the loneliness, the neglect, and the menial drudgery.

He is studiously vague. Carlyle once spoke of a biography which, when you wished to know a fact, treated you as it were to a burst of wind-music. Froude is even worse; for his wind-music is an eternal bag-pipe drone without variations.

He does, however, at rare intervals, condescend to give a few details. They are meant to be heart-rending, and are really so absurd, when contrasted with the truth, that they are well worth critical study. He insists that Miss Jewsbury's stories are true in substance, magnifies them without scruple, and always reverts at fit intervals to the theory he adopted from her, that it was the hard life at Craigenputtock which broke Mrs. Carlyle's health. "Her bodily ailments were chiefly caused by exposure and overwork." If the "occasional tenderness," shown in some lines of poetry Carlyle addressed to his wife, "could have been formed into a habit, Mrs. Carlyle . . . would probably have escaped the worst of them" (her ailments), "because she would have thought it worth while to take care of herself" (ii. 422).

This in brief compass is Mr. Froude's strange story of the New Griselda — truly a skilful continuation of his romantic narrative of the wooing of the high-born maid.

No wonder Mr. Froude thought Carlyle should not have married any one. If all he says is true, that opinion would be general. But *is* his story true? The bold statements he makes have hitherto been too readily accepted without examination. The time has now come to examine them.

Mr. Froude is never weary of protesting that he told the truth. Maybe he believed he did. If so, it is hard to understand how he so happily omitted to

give due prominence to the fact that his account of the life of the Carlyles at Craigenputtock is a contradiction of Carlyle's own account. He was quite aware of that. He hints it plainly—in a footnote.

Carlyle wrote to his mother on May 2, 1832: "Jane is far heartier now that she has got to work: to bake; and, mark this, to *preserve eggs* in lime-water; so that, as I said, the household stands on a quite tolerable footing." Whereupon Mr. Froude inserts a footnote: "A mistake on Carlyle's part. Mrs. Carlyle had not strength for household work. She did it; but it permanently broke down her health." In the text, before quoting the letter, Mr. Froude prepares the reader to disbelieve Carlyle by saying,—"It was his peculiarity, that if matters were well with himself, it never occurred to him that they could be going ill with any one else" (ii. 268). This is a very common form of selfishness. Would it were peculiar! But there is no evidence that it was seen in Carlyle, and there is overwhelming proof of the contrary.

Truly it is a pity, for Mr. Froude's sake, that he did not fully let his readers into the secret that his chief reason for thus imputing, as he continually does, lack of observation and sympathy to the most observant and sympathetic of men, was chiefly this, that Carlyle gave one account of the life at Craigenputtock and Mr. Froude gave another. The omission does seem to suggest a certain want of candour, but it may have been due only to the artistic instinct which rejects anything likely to diminish the pleasure of the reader by raising doubts.

Happily the matter is now one about which doubt is not possible. There is no longer room for difference of opinion.

Here are some extracts from what Carlyle jotted down in his "Reminiscences":—

"Of our history at Craigenputtock there might a good deal be written which might amuse the curious. . . . It is a History I by no means intend to write,—with such or with any object. To me there is a *sacredness* of interest in it; consistent only with *silence*. It was the field of endless nobleness, and beautiful talent and virtue, in Her who is now gone; also of good industry, and many loving and blessed thoughts in myself, while living there by her side. . . . It looks to me now like a kind of humble russet-coated *epic*, that seven years' settlement at Craigenputtock. . . . And we were driven and pushed into it, as if by Necessity, and its beneficent though ugly little shocks and pushes, shock after shock gradually compelling us thither! 'For a Divinity doth shape our ends, rough-hew them how *we* will.' . . . (ii. 243–245).

"Geraldine's *Craigenputtock* stories are more mythical than any of the rest. Each consists of two or three, in confused exaggerated state, rolled with new confusion into one, and given wholly to *her*, when perhaps they were mainly some servant's in whom she was concerned." He discusses some anecdotes, of which take one about milking. "That of milking with her own little hand, I think, could never have been *necessary*, even by accident (plenty of milkmaids within call), and I conclude must have had a spice of frolic or *adventure* in it, for which she had abundant spirit. Perfection of housekeeping was her clear and speedy attainment in that new scene. Strange how she made the Desert blossom for herself and me there; what a fairy palace she had made of that wild moorland home of the poor man! . . .

"We had trouble with servants, with many paltry elements and objects; and were very poor: but I do not think our days there were sad,—and certainly not *hers* in especial, but mine rather. We read together at night,

—one winter, through 'Don Quixote' in the original; Tasso in ditto had come before,—but that did not last very long. I was diligently writing and reading there; wrote most of the 'Miscellanies' there, for Foreign, Edinburgh, &c., Reviews (obliged to keep *several* strings to my bow),—and took serious thought about every part of every one of them: after finishing an Article, we used to get on horseback, or mount into our soft old Gig, and drive away, either to her Mother's (Templand, fourteen miles off), or to my Father and Mother's (Scotsbrig, seven- or six-and-thirty miles);—the pleasantest journeys I ever made, and the pleasantest visits. Stay perhaps three days; hardly ever more than four; then back to work and silence. My Father she particularly loved. . . . At Templand or there," *i.e.* Scotsbrig, "our presence always made a sunshiny time. To Templand we sometimes rode on an evening, to return next day early enough for something of work: this was charming generally" (i. 80–83). . . . "Oh those pleasant gig-drives, in fine leafy twilight, or deep in the night sometimes, ourselves two alone in the world, the good 'Harry' *faring* us (rather too light for the job, but always soft and willing), how they rise on me now, benignantly luminous from the bosom of the grim dead night! What would I give for *one*, the very worst of them, at this moment!" (i. 163). . . . "We were not unhappy at Craigenputtock; perhaps these were our happiest days" (i. 83).

While it is clear enough that Mr. Froude was aware that his narrative generally differed from Carlyle's, the most important difference escaped his notice, owing to the scandalous manner in which he scamped his work in editing the "Reminiscences."

Professor Norton lost no time in correcting his mistake in the *New Princeton Review* for July 1886, but subsequent biographers have not appreciated its import-

ance. Commenting on Miss Jewsbury's mythical account of Craigenputtock, Carlyle noticed her strange theory regarding Mrs. Carlyle's health and corrected it. The death of her father, Dr. Welsh, he remarked, was "her first sorrow; and her greatest of all. It broke her health, permanently, within the next two or three years, and, in a sense, almost broke her heart" (i. 72). Unfortunately Mr. Froude had read and printed these words thus,—"It broke her health for the next two or three years,"—as if within two or three years after her father's death Miss Welsh had been tolerably well again. When Mr. Froude did allude to the effect of grief for her father's death on the lady's health, it was merely to mention it as an aggravation of her husband's cruelty and neglect at Craigenputtock.

Here then is the greatest difference between what Carlyle says and what Mr. Froude says. No ingenuity can possibly reconcile the two conflicting narratives. Mr. Froude shows by his attempts to discredit Carlyle's account that he himself felt so. Since then we are reduced to the painful alternative of deciding whether we are to believe Mr. Froude or Thomas Carlyle regarding the life of Carlyle and his wife at Craigenputtock, it seems best to begin with the question of her health. The pathos of Mr. Froude's whole romance turns on this.

We have to ascertain whether Mrs. Carlyle's almost chronic ill-health dated from two or three years after her father's death, *i.e.* three or four years before her marriage, as her husband alleged, or was mainly the result of the hard work, neglect, and exposure at Craigenputtock, as Miss Jewsbury and Mr. Froude alleged.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TRUTH ABOUT MRS. CARLYLE'S HEALTH

MISS JEWSBURY was aware that the misery expressed in Mrs. Carlyle's journal (1855–56) was largely the result of physical pain. "It was a very bad time with her just then. No one but herself or one constantly with her knows what she suffered physically as well as morally," remarked Miss Jewsbury, on reading the journal MS., but she shows in discussing Craigenputtock that Mrs. Carlyle had not taken her into her confidence as to the *history* of her ill-health.

To other lady friends Mrs. Carlyle was more explicit, and from what she said to them it appears that she was subject to physical derangements that often cause hysteria, and always cause great periodical exhaustion, for years before she was married and for nearly the whole of her life afterwards. She herself used language that cannot be better summarised than by the words, "that long disease, my life."

It should be added that from her own and her husband's letters it appears that, in addition to ailments peculiar to her sex, perhaps in consequence of them, doctors may remark, she had to endure much sleeplessness and dyspepsia. She was, however, of a hysterical temperament, and it appears to have been the opinion of her doctors that she was prone to exaggerate her sufferings.

How far her ailments were imaginary is not a matter that concerns us at present. We wish to know merely

the date and the true cause of her chronic ill-health such as it was, and happily there is convincing and conclusive evidence extant in letters written by the lady herself.

Professor Ritchie's volume of her early letters is known to those who have read the preceding chapters about the love-story, and so is Miss Stodart. Here is an extract from a letter written about fourteen months before Miss Welsh became Mrs. Carlyle:—

Miss Welsh to Miss Stodart.

TEMPLAND, 13*th Aug.* 1825.

". . . We were grieved to hear of your indisposition, and, as people have always most sympathy for afflictions to which themselves are liable, we pitied you the more that your illness proceeded from bile. . . . Think of me! *I have been engaged in this same warfare, now, several years, and have never been able to work out more than a few weeks of truce.*[1] Eh bien! 'ye shall become perfect through sufferings,' says the Scripture—a wholesome, comfortable doctrine for a bilious subject!

"My life is passing on here in *the usual alternating manner. One day I am ill, and in bed; the next, in full puff at an entertainment.*[1] On the whole, however, I feel myself better since I came here, than I had done for several months. What pains me most is that, between headaches and visiting, my *education* is completely at a stand. Every day my conscience reminds me of this. . . . After all, I am not *very* blameable on the score of idleness; it is in vain to think of toiling up the steep of knowledge with a burden of sickness on one's shoulders, and hardly less difficult for a young person with *my attractions* to lead the life of a recluse, however much I wish it."

[1] Italics mine.—D. W.

On 1st February 1828, *i.e.* between fifteen and sixteen months after his marriage and before his wife and he left Edinburgh for Craigenputtock, Carlyle wrote thus to his brother, Dr. Carlyle, then at Munich:—

"*My* Jane, I grieve to say, is yet far enough from well; but I hope much from Summer weather, and a smart pony in the South. She is not by any means an established *valetudinarian;* yet she seldom has a day of true health, and has not *gained* strength certainly since you left her" (Norton's "Letters of T. C.," i. 125).

This extract explains what Mr. Froude himself tells us about their change of residence to Craigenputtock. "Happily her mother, when the scheme was mentioned to her, approved heartily. . . . Mrs. Welsh was so anxious to have the Carlyles there, that she undertook to put the rooms in repair and to pay the expenses of the move" (i. 387).

It seemed to Mr. Froude sufficient explanation of the good mother's eagerness that the "present tenant" was unsatisfactory, and that Templand, Mrs. Welsh's residence, "was but fifteen miles from Craigenputtock gate, not more than a morning's ride, and frequent meetings could be looked forward to." This was only a part of the truth. We have seen that Miss Welsh before her marriage found her health benefited by a long visit to Templand, and there is really no room for doubt that Mrs. Welsh hoped to see her daughter strengthened by living in the country. It does not appear that she ever regretted Mrs. Carlyle's stay at Craigenputtock.

One witness as to the state of the lady's health *shortly after* her arrival there was her sister-in-law, Mrs. Alexander Carlyle, who lived in the farmhouse beside them. Mrs. Carlyle she said, was "*always* delicate."

Carlyle often nursed his wife tenderly, "as well as my own mother could have done," she said once. That

he always watched her health carefully, and that it was better at Craigenputtock than in either Edinburgh or London, might be proved at length from the letters written at the time by herself and her husband. Omitting all these for brevity, let us pass on to 1833, and glance at letters she wrote to Eliza Stodart within a few months of her final departure from Craigenputtock.

For the sake of amusement, turn first to Mr. Froude's veracious chronicle. He tells how she was toiling as usual that summer at Craigenputtock:—

"Mrs. Carlyle, who was still ailing, was carried off by her mother . . . in the hope that change of air *and relief from household work*[1] might be of use to her, and was taking a tour through the hills about Moffat" (ii. 364). The biographer apparently wishes us to suppose poor Mrs. Welsh was afflicted by the sight of her delicate daughter milking cows, scouring floors, cooking dinners, &c., without a kind word of thanks to cheer her up, and so the anxious mother carried her off for a few days' respite from the neglect and drudgery that were ruining her constitution. How strange it is that Mrs. Welsh herself made no complaint on that subject! Why did not Mr. Froude moralise on that most exemplary mother-in-law?

The plain truth can be seen from Mrs. Carlyle's letters. Here is an extract describing the household work from which she needed relief:—

Mrs. Carlyle to Miss Stodart.

CRAIGENPUTTOCK, *28th July* 1833.

". . . On the whole this summer has passed away pleasantly; when I wake in the morning, and wink my eyes, and ascertain that I have still no headache, I spring up in good humour for the day, prepared to take the

[1] Italics mine.—D. W.

rest as I find it. The *work* I have done would go little way in furnishing out a set of dining tables (Mrs. Davies's were exhibited to her acquaintance, for three days, before the sale of Ladies' work, spread over with twenty pounds' worth of nicknacks!); but it is enough to keep my hand in, and the Devil out, who 'is always,' they say, 'at the elbow of an idle man,' still more of an idle woman. I am more intent in getting all the good possible from the free access one has here to the open air. I am out and in all day long; neither walking nor working with any continuance, but combining all sorts of exercise and all sorts of tasks in the most rapid alternation. A well-fitting gown and a rather stylish bonnet have received beginning and finish in this way, also one cap, one collar, and one shift. Nor has my hand forgot its cunning in kneading dough and '*pressing the snowy curd*' (no good sign of curd, by the way, which is the better the yellower it is). Accordingly there is a cheese lying in state for your Uncle."

After the Moffat expedition she wrote again:—

Same to same.

CRAIGENPUTTOCK (Postmark, *Nov. 9th*, 1833).

"I take your congratulation on the benefit received from my Moffat expedition in good part, tho' nothing in the world could be more misplaced. The expedition was *ennuyante* while it lasted, and injurious in its effects. I am hardly yet so well as before I went thither. However, I am much better now than I was last year at this time, and have a sort of moderate hope that I shall by degrees get quite well, or rather as well as ever I was; for, to say the truth, my whole life has been a sort of *puddling* as to health. Too much of schooling hadst thou, poor Ophelia! . . ."

Let us now turn to Miss Jewsbury for an explanation of the reference to too much schooling. Reporting Mrs. Carlyle's talk, she tells us some anecdotes of the lady's girlhood,—the only part of the narrative which Carlyle pronounced "substantially correct":—

"She was always anxious to work hard, and would sit up half the night over her lessons. One day she had been greatly perplexed by a problem in Euclid; she *could not* solve it. At last she went to bed; and in a dream got up and did it, and went to bed again. In the morning she had no consciousness of her dream; but, on looking at her slate, there was the problem solved.

"She was afraid of sleeping too much, and used to tie a weight to one of her ankles that she might awake. Her mother discovered it; and her father forbade her to rise before five o'clock. She was a most healthy little thing then; only she did her best to ruin her health, not knowing what she did."

Two extracts from Mrs. Carlyle's later letters may be made to corroborate what Miss Jewsbury reports. In 1848, being at Addiscombe, she wrote to her husband: "Seeking through the books, I came upon 'The Romance of the Forest,' which I seized on with avidity, remembering the 'tremendous' emotions with which I read it in my night-shift, by the red light of our dying schoolroom fire, nearly half a century ago, when I was supposed to be sleeping the sleep of good children." It is perhaps needful to mention that "The Romance of the Forest" was one of a series of once popular novels by a Mrs. Radcliffe, sufficiently described by the poet who wrote—

> "O Radcliffe, thou once wert the charmer
> Of girls who sat reading all night;
> Thy heroes were striplings in armour,
> Thy heroines damsels in white."

In the year 1849 Mrs. Carlyle paid a visit to Haddington and to her old school there. "It was become an infant school!" she noted, "and a Miss Alexander was now teacher where Edward Irving and James Brown had taught. Miss A—— and her infants were not, it seemed, early risers, their schoolroom after eight o'clock was only being swept: it was at seven of the morning that James Brown found me asleep there, after two hours' hard study, asleep between the leaves of the Great Atlas, like a keep lesson!"

Even when allowance is made for exaggeration, it is clear that Mrs. Carlyle injured her health by overstudy, when young. Miss Jewsbury says she was healthy then; but she never was strong enough to undertake such hard study with impunity. From her mother she inherited a nervous temperament, "variable as the shade by the light quivering aspen made." Mrs. Welsh, it was credibly reported, had been seen "one evening in fifteen different humours." And alas! though Mrs. Welsh "had much weak health," her daughter was weaker still. "My mother," she remarked once, "was always so much gayer than I." From her father she inherited an infirm constitution, apparently with a tendency to consumption. He was one of a family of fourteen, and yet it was because there was no heir of that family to receive Craigenputtock that Carlyle left it to Edinburgh University. Here are some words Mrs. Carlyle wrote in the last year of her life:—

"One thinks it so sad that one's family should die out! And yet, perhaps, it is best (nay, of course it is best, since God has so ordered it!) that a family lying under the doom of a hereditary, deadly malady should die out, and leave its room in the universe to healthier and happier people!" ("Letters and Memorials," iii. 306).

It is needless to quote more. Reading again what

Miss Jewsbury has written, one notices almost for the first time that the veracious but hysterical little lady does not expressly attribute to Mrs. Carlyle her theory about Craigenputtock ruining Mrs. Carlyle's health. "It was undoubtedly, &c. . . ." There was no doubt on the subject in Miss Jewsbury's mind, but it is a pity she did not more exactly discriminate between what Mrs. Carlyle said, and what she herself inferred or imagined.

Writing to Carlyle to excuse her "little book of myths," Miss Jewsbury explained that she had written what she remembered of "'narratives long ago, on our first acquaintance, &c., &c.,' and fermenting and agglomerating in my mind ever since!" Carlyle accepted the excuse and so may we. Let us call Miss Jewsbury's theory a product of fermentation.

It is even possible to guess at the various stages in the process of fermentation in Miss Jewsbury's mind.

Carlyle was always courteous to her as a friend of his wife. She had also earned his gratitude by her kindness in assiduously nursing Mrs. Carlyle for about a month in 1846, when Mrs. Carlyle was very ill, "for which she never forgot Geraldine," remarked the grateful husband. His gratitude led him to visit Miss Jewsbury and her brother in the following summer, 1847. Mr. Espinasse saw him there then, and describes the visit:—

"At the little parties, which the hospitable Jewsburys gave in his honour to his friends and the friends of his friends, Carlyle was always genial, pleasantly conversible, never vehement. . . . Soon after arriving at his destination in his beloved Dumfriesshire, he wrote Miss Jewsbury one of those beautiful letters in the inditing of which none could equal him, encouraging her in her attempt to make the home over which she presided the socially intellectual centre so much needed in such a place as Manchester then was."

It seems likely that the triumphant Miss Jewsbury showed that letter to Mr. Espinasse, and was doubtless very happy and grateful then. But Miss Jewsbury had been smitten with the itch of literary ambition. She was a novelist and critic, and—alas, that it now *needs* to be mentioned—a successful writer, forerunner of Mrs. Ward, Sarah Grand, and others. Carlyle knew what her *success* was worth, and the conflict between politeness and truthfulness, which sharp observers often noticed in him, ended as usual with him in a courteous candour, which Miss Jewsbury found exceedingly disagreeable. "Of course," she wrote in 1851, "one would never have the wild expectation that Mr. Carlyle will ever approve or admire any human effort."[1]

When Mrs. Carlyle died, Miss Jewsbury wrote a MS., entitled "In Memoriam Jane Welsh Carlyle," and Professor Norton has printed the letter which Carlyle had to write to her regarding it.[2] He not only criticised her work as "*mythical*," but, worst of all, took steps to prevent even the MS. being generally circulated.

This last provocation made the little lady's wrath foam over, and the humble tone in which she wrote to Carlyle to excuse herself, and the deferential references to Carlyle in the condemned MS., are in curious contrast to the shrieky vehemence of the letter Mr. Froude induced her to write to himself,[3] and which, though he must have received it while Carlyle lived,[4] he never showed to Carlyle, but printed without scruple in Mrs. Carlyle's "Letters and Memorials."

[1] "Letters of G. E. Jewsbury," p. 429.

[2] "Reminiscences," i. 68, 69.

[3] Cp. "Letters and Memorials," ii. pp. 274, 275 with "Reminiscences," i. pp. 64–69.

[4] Miss Jewsbury died September 23, 1880, or, as Mrs. Ireland will have it, "folded" her "bright wings" on that date, and presumably laid down her pen.

In that letter the erroneous theory adopted by Mr. Froude is stated vaguely but with great emphasis. In considering the letter, several things must be remembered.

The first and most important thing is that Miss Jewsbury was not aware of Carlyle's correction of her theory regarding his wife's health. She presumably had not read the "Reminiscences" MSS., and died before that book was published at all, and long before it was correctly edited. Only his scandalous carelessness prevented *Mr. Froude* knowing Carlyle's corrections. But Miss Jewsbury is blameless.

Again, her letter to Mr. Froude was in effect though not ostensibly her appeal to him against Carlyle's verdict on her own "In Memoriam" MS. Mr. Froude had been her friend for more than a quarter of a century, and also nursed a grievance against Carlyle similar to her own. It must have been about the time when Mr. Froude was assiduously visiting Miss Jewsbury during her last illness that he was being made to feel "like the drenched hen in 'Frederick the Great'" by Carlyle's criticisms of his own writings. So it is not surprising that he was prone to think Carlyle unjust, and that Miss Jewsbury's appeal to him was successful. Her MS. was printed by the obliging executor almost before Carlyle was cold. Nay, it appears probable that it was printed though not published before Carlyle died.

In fairness to Miss Jewsbury, it must further be remembered that her theory originated partly in her knowledge of the nature of Mrs. Carlyle's illness in 1846 and afterwards, but also partly in her ignorance of the *previous history* of that illness. Moreover, Miss Jewsbury's letter, in which alone her theory is emphasised, may have been written when she was dying of cancer, and not quite in a condition to form a reliable judgment even on such facts as she knew. Finally, if even these considerations make

it difficult for any one to forgive the poor lady, let it be added that for the mischief done by her delusion not she but Mr. Froude is responsible, and that when the truth is known, the delusion can do no more harm.

So far as can be discovered, Mr. Froude never thought of consulting the doctors who attended Mrs. Carlyle. One, who wished to give him important information, he seems to have studiously avoided. This was surely a curious procedure on the part of a biographer who gave the lady's ill-health such prominence in his narrative.

The opinions of competent doctors regarding Mrs. Carlyle's health, so far as such opinions can now be ascertained, may thus be summarised :—

" Miss Welsh inherited a feeble constitution, and over-study in her early years contributed to injure her health, never robust. Her great grief for her father's death was partly a symptom of the damage already done to her nerves, partly a cause of more damage. Her studious habits hindered her recovery, and her nervous and other ailments soon became chronic." [1] It is probably easily possible for any skilful doctor who takes the trouble to consider the facts of Mrs. Carlyle's life to see the justice of this opinion.

But, whatever the medical explanation, the fact that her health was permanently broken three or four years before her marriage is not a matter of opinion at all. Carlyle's explicit statement to that effect is so fully corroborated that this must be considered a fact proved, and nothing more is needed to render Mr. Froude's narrative of the early married life of the Carlyles extremely questionable. The weak health he speaks of as an aggravation of her husband's perversity at Craigenputtock was in reality a thing incompatible with what he

[1] For opinions of doctors, see footnote, p. 247.

describes. Doctors have affirmed, when informed of her actual physical condition, that if she had been treated as Mr. Froude says she was she would not have lived; or, according to the opinions of many intimate friends of herself and of her husband, she *would* have lived, but certainly not with Carlyle! She was, as she deserved to be, a petted and spoiled wife, never an ill-treated one. There never lived a woman "less likely to stand any nonsense."

CHAPTER XXIV

WHOM TO BELIEVE?

BEFORE proceeding to discuss other details in which Mr. Froude's narrative differs from Carlyle's, it is necessary to allude to the difference between the two men. It is not prejudice but true wisdom to be guided by such considerations in deciding which of the two is the more worthy of belief.

Carlyle wrote the "Reminiscences" when suffering the first shock of grief for his wife's death, and without thought of publication. No one, therefore, need be surprised to learn that he rather understated than overstated what he had done to make her happy. This seems to have been the opinion of all who were acquainted with them, or rather of all except James Anthony Froude. Even Mr. Froude, however, celebrates Carlyle's marvellous and habitual accuracy as a writer, and when the "Reminiscences" are compared with early letters and other documents, the only corrections to be made are either of trivial details or do not concern Carlyle or his wife.

Mr. Froude was known to have access to unpublished MSS. and letters. So when his work first appeared, it was natural to suppose he had due authority for the statements he boldly ventured. The letters of Carlyle up to 1836 have now been edited with judicial impartiality by Professor Norton, and there is nothing in them, or as there is good reason to believe in the unpublished MSS., to support Mr. Froude's story.

Such errors as have been discovered in the "Reminiscences" chiefly relate to Mrs. Irving and other ladies. They seem to have been correctly accounted for by Mrs. Oliphant, who attributes them to "his curious loyal yet almost prosaic adoption of suggestions, taken evidently from his wife." This might easily be a source of error when he was alluding to ladies who had not had the happiness to please Mrs. Carlyle, but it could hardly mislead him in any way when he was describing how his wife and he lived at Edinburgh, or Craigenputtock, or London.

Accordingly, the letters written by both himself and her while they lived at Craigenputtock, and the statements of those who knew them then, do not enable us to correct his account, but only to illustrate it, and add to it instances of his tender care for his wife, which seemed to him too much a matter of course to need mention.

Mr. Froude on the other hand was notoriously careless in stating matters of fact. Any reader who rashly insisted on proof of this would soon have to say with Michael in Byron's "Vision of Judgment,"—

> "Why, my dear Lucifer, would you abuse
> My call for witnesses? I did not mean
> That you should half of earth and hell produce;
> 'Tis even superfluous. . . ."

It *is* superfluous. There is perhaps nothing in the history of literature that can be more safely taken for granted.

In his "History of England" and many of his other writings, Mr. Froude was often right in the outline of his narrative though wrong in details. In many instances, as *e.g.* in his view of Henry VIII., this was due to his following the teaching or advice of Carlyle. In sketching Carlyle's life he had not the benefit of

Carlyle's advice, for Carlyle could not, more than any other man, *see himself*. Froude rashly ventured to form a theory of his own, in direct contradiction to what Carlyle had written, and he did not in that, any more than in his other works, take the trouble to verify his notions of what "must have happened" by careful investigation of what did happen. When a man is content to take his facts from his imagination, a few blunders in shaping his theory at the outset are apt to lead to many blunders as he proceeds.

In Mr. Froude's description of the life of the Carlyles at Craigenputtock, Miss Jewsbury's mistaken guess as to the date and cause of Mrs. Carlyle's ill-health was the chief part of his theory, and all his statements were ingeniously shaped to prove the truth of a theory which we have discovered to be untrue.

Perhaps it may be suggested that Mr. Froude had many sources of information in addition to the unpublished letters and MSS. But as a matter of fact, wherever Mr. Froude's story is in conflict with Carlyle's statements, the other evidence corroborates Carlyle and contradicts Mr. Froude. Before proceeding to examine the curiosities of literary invention with which Mr. Froude deluded his readers, it may be worth while to glance at some extracts from his published correspondence, which show how minutely and carefully he made local inquiries:—

"5 Onslow Gardens,
March 19 [1880].

"I am hard at work on Carlyle's life. As soon as the leaves are on the trees, I must make a little tour about Dumfriesshire — chiefly in Annandale — looking at places where Carlyle lived and Irving lived. . . . Three days would exhaust it all. . . ."

"*November* 16 [1880].

"We had a very interesting day in Annandale, saw all that we wanted, and made the necessary sketches. We were favoured by the weather, nine fine hours. . . ."

So little of his correspondence has been published that a complete account of his inquiries cannot be given. He visited Scotsbrig and Craigenputtock and also Mainhill. He tells us that he paid a short visit to Mainhill on the day of the funeral. That was probably his second visit, perhaps his third. All his visits, however, seem to have been made in haste. Where he can be traced, he seems to have rather imparted than received information.

He gives his visit to Mainhill on the day of Carlyle's funeral such prominence in his biography that it is specially worth discussing. As often happens, Mr. Froude's account differs from fact in an almost ludicrous manner, and there is a little thing to be incidentally disclosed which illuminates, momentarily and painfully, as if by a flash of lightning, Mr. Froude's true sentiments and character.

Here are the words of the sentimental mourner, writing as if with the handkerchief in one hand and the pen in the other:—

(After telling how he took solemn farewell of Carlyle on 4th February, and Carlyle died next day, he describes the funeral arrangements and the arrival at Ecclefechan station, and continues): "The hearse, with the coffin, stood solitary in the station-yard, as some waggon might stand, waiting to be unloaded. They do not study form in Scotland, and the absence of respect had nothing unusual about it. But the look of that black, snow-sprinkled object, standing there so desolate, was painful; and, to lose sight of it in the three hours which we

had to wait, we walked up to Mainhill, the small farm-house, two miles distant. . . ."

This was on 10th February. Carlyle died on 5th February. Mr. Froude had taken leave of him and departed, "weeping," says an eye-witness, on 30th January,[1] and never again saw Carlyle alive. He had not forgotten him by any means. He knew that he was to be an executor under Carlyle's will, that there was sure to be much public curiosity regarding the funeral, and that an invitation to it would be highly appreciated by many literary gentlemen. So, *on 3rd February, two days before Carlyle died*, Mr. Froude wrote a letter telling his friend Mr. Skelton how ill Carlyle was, *and offering him an invitation to Carlyle's funeral.*[2] On the 8th February, two days before the funeral, he wrote to tell Mr. Skelton the day and hour, and promised him, "if the weather is fine," a pleasant walk to Mainhill, apparently as an additional attraction.[3] So we must really consider this visit to Mainhill as part of his local inquiries, agreeably combining pleasure and business—not at all a thing undertaken on the impulse of the moment to relieve his feelings.

The farmer's wife, whom he found there "making cheeses in the dairy," vividly remembered the visit. She spoke of Lecky and Tyndall with much respect, and had few words of theirs to report. But she smiled after thirteen years at the recollection of Mr. Froude's sentimental talk, chiefly about her own children. It seemed characteristic of him that she told of no *questions asked* by him, but repeated much that he had said to her.

[1] See p. 127 of the "Illustrated Memorial Volume of the Carlyle House Purchase Fund Committee," near the end of the excellent "Chronology of Events" appended to it. This serious conflict of dates was intentional, not a mere slip of the pen, on the part of the editor of that volume.

[2] *Blackwood's Magazine*, January 1895, p. 43. [3] Ibid.

Apparently he spoke as if he already knew everything worth knowing. But the surprise of the farmer's wife at the voluminous talk addressed to her would have been less if she had reflected that Mr. Froude might have wished to impress his companions. That seems to be the likeliest explanation of his volubility on the occasion.

There was at least one worthy gentleman resident in Dumfriesshire who met Mr. Froude, and could have told him much about Carlyle. He had in his possession a portrait of Carlyle which (though he did not know it) it seems likely that Mr. Froude wished to see, and did not know where to seek. But Mr. Froude had such a supercilious air of omniscience that this worthy gentleman took refuge in silence, and so Mr. Froude missed an opportunity of avoiding some of his blunders.

In short, Professor Masson's complaint that Mr. Froude did not supplement the documents he had to work upon by "any such amount of independent inquiry and research as is usually expected from a biographer," can be easily verified wherever Mr. Froude can be traced. There were hundreds of possible witnesses. He seems to have questioned none carefully except Miss Jewsbury.

Such were the inquiries that seemed sufficient to this biographer. Few novelists, in quest merely of local colour, would not have taken more pains. But it cannot be denied that Mr. Froude's sentiments admirably qualified him to arrange his master's—funeral.

CHAPTER XXV

CRAIGENPUTTOCK

"CRAIGENPUTTOCK," wrote Professor Nichol with evident surprise, "is by no means 'the dreariest spot in all the British dominions.' On a sunny day it is an inland home with wide billowy straths of grass around . . . and the long rolling ridges of the Solway hills in front . . . inestimable silence broke only by the placid bleating of sheep." But in winter, the Professor explains, it "may be dreary enough." This is perhaps meant as an apology for Mr. Froude, who may have visited it in bad weather.

Professor Nichol's *surprise* was due to his implicit faith in Mr. Froude; for, indeed, by his verbal remarks to myself when Mr. Froude's books were appearing, he allayed my suspicions for several years. Engrossed in other business, and esteeming and liking much the genial and gifted man Nichol, I trusted to his assurances almost until his own "Life of Carlyle" was published.

Let those critics who said that his patriotism misled him regarding Craigenputtock visit the place. They will find that Craigenputtock is not nearly so dreary as they have supposed. Dr. Garnett was misled by Mr. Froude when he called it a "farmhouse." As Professor Masson says, "Besides the farmhouse . . . occupied by the farmer who rented it, there was another and superior house, the humble mansion-house of the property, with sufficient appurtenances of garden, stabling, &c." [1]

[1] "Edinburgh Sketches and Memories," pp. 356, 357.

It was described by Carlyle himself, and may yet be seen by any traveller to be a "clean, substantial dwelling," "among the Granite Mountains and black moors which stretch westward through Galloway almost to the Irish sea." Even yet there are few houses in all Nithsdale more snug and comfortable. Carlyle added a storey to the building, so that Mrs. Carlyle had a better house to dwell in than her ancestors ever had. "This is," Carlyle wrote to Goethe, "as it were, a green oasis in that desert of heath and rock; a piece of ploughed and partially sheltered and ornamented ground, where corn ripens and trees yield umbrage, though encircled on all hands by moorfowl and only the hardiest breeds of sheep." It is indeed an oasis in the desert, but it is on the edge of the desert and in sight of other oases. The house stands snugly sheltered on the shoulder of a low hill, nestled among trees, near to the high road between the well-cultivated valley of the Cairn, close at hand on the east, all dotted with human dwellings, and the similar valley of the Urr on the south. Carlyle planted many trees, but Mr. Moir's sketches, made while the Carlyles were there, show that there was no lack of trees even then. There are and were good roads, and many houses within a few miles. Dumfries is within "two hours' riding," about fifteen miles of road through one of the most fair and fertile valleys in the lowlands of Scotland.

On the opposite side of the Solway Firth is the English lake district. Carlyle's admiration for the humble yet heroic lives of Wordsworth and Southey then living there led him, as his letters prove, to hope that on the Scottish side of the Solway he too might not find it impossible to attract some genial fellow-workers in literature to be his neighbours. But Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, "Christopher North," though seductively invited, would not even visit him. Emerson for a day, and Jeffrey for

a few days were his only visitors "of genius." Of other visitors there need have been no lack. It was not because they had no visitors or neighbours that both he and his wife at last thought the place a solitude.

Readers of his "Frederick" know the "Reinsberg Program" of that great king. When the life of Carlyle is truly told, his "Craigenputtock Program" must receive the same prominence. But in the meantime it must suffice to say that Mrs. Carlyle's subsequent allusions to the place have been completely misunderstood by nearly all the biographers.

Mr. Froude prints in a footnote (ii. 29–31) a letter Mrs. Carlyle wrote in 1857 to a Miss Smith, describing her life at Craigenputtock. Mr. Froude does remark that it was written "nearly thirty years" after the events it describes. He even prints with unusual accuracy. There are eighty errors of the press in fifty-eight lines,[1] but none of them are important. The letter has now been printed at length in "Mary Smith, Schoolmistress and Nonconformist" (pp. 308, 312), and from that book it appears that this letter was Mrs. Carlyle's kindly way of softening an *un*favourable verdict from herself and her husband on a volume of Miss Smith's poetry, which she had sent to Mrs. Carlyle.

Miss Smith had had to do much drudgery, and Mrs. Carlyle, singling out for praise some of the lady's verses "on the meaning of *the Present*," took the opportunity to let her know how much she esteemed her diligent and sensible behaviour. Then in a kind, motherly tone (for in point of years she *might* have been her mother), saying in effect, 'see what I also had to undergo,' Mrs. Carlyle recounted some of her own early experiences.

Much of the letter consists of a vivid account of her

[1] Assuming that the letter is correctly printed in the later book, entitled "Mary Smith."

baking of her first loaf, and it may not be amiss to mention that there was a great deal of baking done at nearly every farmhouse and country-house in Scotland at that time. It was a matter of course then and there, and probably every servant Mrs. Carlyle had at Craigenputtock, however unqualified for drawing-room work, knew well how to bake. If she had not herself chosen to learn to bake, scarcely any one would have noticed the omission. But to bake was more attractive than the dull routine of housework, which bored her, and she applied herself to learn to bake in a distinguished manner. She had yeast brought up from Dumfries, and so was able to produce bread better than any that could be baked at most country-houses. After she had once learned baking she probably saw it done oftener than she did it.

According to her own account of her first loaf, she sat up till after 3 A.M., when her husband as well as every other person in the house was asleep. The simple truth was pleasantly told by Carlyle when he read Miss Jewsbury's narrative:—

"I can remember very well her coming in to me, late at night (eleven or so), with her *first loaf*, looking mere triumph and quizzical gaiety: 'See!' The loaf was excellent, only the crust a little burnt; and she compared herself to Cellini and his *Perseus*, of whom we had been reading."

The rest of Mrs. Carlyle's letter to Miss Smith is scarcely more accurate than her account of her first attempt at baking. But the only point on which there is room to touch here is her reference to her feelings when she went to Craigenputtock. It should be remembered that Mrs. Carlyle could do little more than allude to the place in this letter, and that, considering her object in writing, it was convenient to refer only to

the disagreeable aspect of it. "Every matter hath *two* handles," said the wise Epictetus.

"I had gone with my husband," she wrote, "to live on a little estate of *peat-bog*, that had descended to me, all the way down from John Welsh, the Covenanter, who married a daughter of John Knox. That didn't, I am ashamed to say, make me feel Craigenputtock a whit less of a peat-bog, and most dreary, untoward place to live at! In fact, it was sixteen miles distant on every side from all the conveniences of life, shops, and even post-office!"

There was undoubtedly a little exaggeration here. The truth was that Mrs. Carlyle, *after she had a house in London*, very much preferred London to Craigenputtock or any other place. It was with some difficulty that she succeeded in making her husband continue there, where he always felt he could not work half as well as at Craigenputtock, "such the interruptions, &c." His health also was not as good in London as in the country. Thus the bright little lady saw fit to magnify all she had undergone while at Craigenputtock—a shrewd feminine method of preventing any suggestion to return thither. In the same way she objected to her husband's proposal that they should keep Templand when her mother died, foreseeing well that, if they kept Templand as a residence, there was danger of the Chelsea house being abandoned. "Her filial heart abhorred the notion," said her husband, in his "Reminiscences," thinking only of the best of her motives, a trait which shows his way of thinking about his "Jeannie." He himself mentions, however, in another connection, how she always preferred London, and "stood in defence of it against" him.

At first, in 1835, about one year after they had removed to Chelsea, writing to tell her sister-in-law how much she liked London, she emphasised chiefly her lively

satisfaction with the society she found there. In comparing her new mode of life with life at Craigenputtock, there was no rejoicing over drudgery escaped. She merely thought London servants more efficient, and found she did not need to "puddle about herself" so much. That was all, and even that she soon found to be a mistake.

Her satisfaction with London servants was short-lived, as all readers of her "Letters" know. She repeatedly reverted to Scotch servants. But the satisfaction she took in the society she found in London never diminished. During the last year of her life she dined out often, indeed, I am told, "nearly every night."

Her husband was pleased that she was happy, and perfectly aware of the reason why she spoke of Craigenputtock with emphasis. If he heard her stories, his sense of humour was probably tickled by the gradual growth of them, like the story Falstaff told about the men in buckram.

It must not be supposed, however, that Mr. Froude's story is hers. She was above lying. Besides, she was too skilful an artist to outrage probability as boldly as he. But his is to a slight extent founded on hers, as Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" was founded on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk.

"What's often said is at last believed," and in 1857 there is no doubt that she attributed her low spirits at the time she went to Craigenputtock altogether to the prospect of living at a place which afterwards appeared very undesirable. But contemporary letters show that whatever depression she felt in 1828 was due partly to feeble health, partly to family bereavements.

She must have spoken very differently of the place only five years after leaving it, when in 1839 she delighted M. Rio with her account of "their six years

of solitude à deux,"[1] and as for her feelings before she went there, it is clear that when living at Edinburgh she was "fond of the project" of living at Craigenputtock. Indeed she never at any time expressed such a loathing for it as for Haddington. She went to Craigenputtock full of hopes for better health, and the letters she wrote to Eliza Stodart after her arrival there show that her spirits rose as soon as she began to feel the influence of a peaceful rural life. What *was* she hoping for? Mr. Froude never guessed what it was. It must be told, but in another chapter.

[1] *Epilogue à L'Art Chrétien*, par A.-F. Rio, vol. ii. p. 335.

CHAPTER XXVI

MRS. CARLYLE'S HOPES AT CRAIGENPUTTOCK

IN his "romantic" account of the love-letters, Mr. Froude says: "There is not a hint anywhere that he (Carlyle) had contemplated as a remote possibility the usual consequence of a marriage—a family of children" (i. 286).

Truly, even if Carlyle had written nothing on the subject, this would have been an inane remark. Lovers do not usually discuss in their letters the probable size of their family! But Mr. Froude himself prints, in the same volume, a few pages farther on, an extract from one of Carlyle's love-letters containing these graceful sentences:—

"Here are two swallows in the corner of my window that have taken a house (not at Comely[1] Bank) this summer; and in spite of drought and bad crops, are bringing up a family together with the highest contentment and unity of soul. Surely, surely, Jane Welsh and Thomas Carlyle here as they stand have in them conjunctly the wisdom of many swallows. Let them exercise it then, in God's name, and live happy as these birds of passage are doing" (i. 354).

How well Mrs. Carlyle had understood this allusion is shown in the pathetic little poem she sent to the Jeffrey family, after she had been married for years, after she had enjoyed for years the healthy country life from which her

[1] Correctly, *Comley*, misspelt by Mr. Froude.

husband and her mother as well as herself had hoped so much—in a word, after she was *beginning* to despair of having any children. It also is printed by Mr. Froude (ii. 291, 292). It is entitled, "To a Swallow building under our Eaves," and the last stanza is this:—

> "God speed thee, pretty bird; *may thy small nest*
> *With little ones all in good time be blest.*
> I love thee much;
> For well thou manages that life of thine,
> While I; Oh, ask not what I do with mine!
> Would I were such!"

It is very hard to isolate Mr. Froude's blunders, and here also a second must be added to the first. He even failed to notice the point of this poem. He reads it as merely a complaint of the hardships of Craigenputtock life! And he complacently adds, with unconscious absurdity (ii. 293), "Jeffrey carried Mrs. Carlyle's sad verses with him to the 'glades' of Richmond, to muse upon them, and *fret over his helplessness!!!*"

Mrs. Carlyle's womanly reticence on this subject in later life reminds one of Lord Houghton's remarks about Lady Ashburton:—

"It was with no disregard of her sex that Lady Ashburton preferred the society of men. Having lost her only child by a sad mischance, she shrank from the sympathies of family life, and avoided topics that might suggest useless regrets. *Nearly the whole of her female companions were in the same domestic position as herself*, and yet to children generally, and especially to those of her intimates, she was kind and even affectionate."[1] This lets us see, also, one of Carlyle's reasons for thinking his wife and Lady Ashburton might well become friends.

Miss Jewsbury could not understand why to Mrs.

[1] "Monographs," p. 247. Italics mine.

Carlyle silence was more agreeable than speech on this topic. There really is reason to believe that Miss Jewsbury was indiscreet enough to allude to it. The "cheerful, transparent little creature," as Carlyle called her, may be excused for not knowing that a Scotch lady would be likely to resent fiercely such an indiscretion as an impertinence; but there must be many ladies who can understand Mrs. Carlyle's feelings, and who require no further explanation as to why she was sometimes caustic to her friend, and christened her "Miss GOOSEBERRY."

It was not by such sympathisers, but by her husband and her own silently devout heart that Mrs. Carlyle was at last led to see that the lack of children must be borne even as the loss of them, and the sad reference to the *extinction* of her family in the letter she wrote in the last year of her life (already quoted in discussing her health) shows how she had resigned herself piously and sincerely to the inevitable.

With delicate tact, her husband forbore to ask her how she wished him to dispose of Craigenputtock, as long as there was a hope that some other "Welsh" might live and leave an heir. Her husband indeed seems to have behaved throughout with a refined silent delicacy, which cannot be made more intelligible by any commentary.

In a letter dated 6th October 1851 (when Mrs. Carlyle was fifty years of age), Miss Jewsbury declared in effect that she would be a daughter to her, and advised her to write a book and dedicate it to her "unknown daughters." She prophesied Carlyle would "dash . . . cold water" on the project. There is no evidence to show he did so, but if he did, it must have been for the sake of her health.

Miss Jewsbury's suggestion perhaps reawakened a little Mrs. Carlyle's early hopes of literary distinction. A few days before her death Mrs. Carlyle entertained

Charles Dickens, who was always a favourite with herself and her husband, with a verbal romance which much delighted him. He was to hear the conclusion at their next meeting, and when he heard of her death he wrote to Forster:—

"How often I have thought of the unfinished novel. No one now to finish it. None of the writing women come near her at all"[1]—an opinion which her husband cordially endorsed when he read it, for which he has been much censured. What intelligent beings some critics are!

There is no doubt that if Carlyle dissuaded his wife from writing, he did only what the most skilful doctors would have advised. Her occasional wish to write explains why he thought a literary monument to her memory would have pleased her best, and so worked for years on the "Letters and Memorials."

The subject of her health must be taken up again in discussing her complaints, but in now dismissing the matter of her childlessness, a reference to it in the "Reminiscences" must not be omitted. The words Carlyle wrote suggest what the private talk of the spouses may have been, and are in many ways significant, *very* significant indeed; for this passage alone is enough to prove, to any one who understands Carlyle, how little he ever dreamed that that "bit of writing" was in danger of publication. The allusion to a child's chair is to a chair which Mrs. Carlyle had herself used when young, and kept in her house, with feelings no woman needs to be told:—

"Her little bit of a first chair, its wee wee arms, &c., visible to me in the closet at this moment, is still here, and always was; I have looked at it hundreds of times;

[1] John Forster's "Life of Charles Dickens," vol. iii. chap. 13, pp. 276, 277.

from of *old*, with many thoughts. No daughter or son of *hers* was to sit there; so it had been appointed us, my Darling. I have no book thousandth part so beautiful as *Thou;* but these were *our* only 'Children,'—and, in a true sense, these *were* verily OURS; and will perhaps live some time in the world, after we are both gone;—and be of no damage to the poor brute chaos of a world, let us hope! The Will of the Supreme shall be accomplished: *Amen.*"

CHAPTER XXVII

HOME LIFE AT CRAIGENPUTTOCK

NOT long after going to Craigenputtock, Mrs. Carlyle wrote to her old friend Eliza Stodart (29th July 1828):—

"By this writing you will know that I have survived my astonishing change; and the talk about tea, &c., will show you that I even look hopefully into life. Indeed, Craigenputtock is no such frightful place as the people call it. . . . If we are cut off from good society, we are also delivered from bad; the roads are less pleasant to walk on than the pavement of Princes Street, but we have horses to ride, and, instead of shopping and making calls, I have bread to bake and chickens to hatch. I read and work, and talk with my husband, and never weary.

"I ride over to Templand occasionally, and my mother and Agnes Ferguson were here last week. They seemed content with the aspect of things. . . ."

These last words are very notable. Mrs. Welsh was "content" with her daughter's home and surroundings, though Mr. Froude seems heart-broken by the thought of what these must have been. Is not that strange?

To those who know the Carlyles only from Mr. Froude's fiction it must seem even stranger that Mrs. Carlyle herself was contented and continued to be so. Sixteen months later, in November 1829, after returning from a visit to Edinburgh, she deliberately compared life in Edinburgh with life at Craigenputtock, in a letter to Miss Stodart:—

"Which mode of living is best? In the sun or in the shade? I declare I cannot tell; my mind seems to have a peculiar knack of adapting itself to either. I liked Edinburgh last time as well as I did at sixteen (you know how well that was), and I cried as much at leaving it; yet, returned to our desert, it affrighted me only the first day. The next day it became tolerable, and the next again positively pleasant." She went on to say the kindness of her friends made her happy in Edinburgh, but she was equally happy at Craigenputtock, "because Carlyle always likes me best *at home*, wherever that happens to be."[1]

Either Mrs. Carlyle deliberately wrote so as to deceive her friend, or Mr. Froude has deceived himself first and then his readers.

From about this date Mrs. Carlyle's letters become more than ever matter-of-fact womanly epistles. The trivial domestic incidents that abound in them, though wearisome to read in a mass, are so brightly told that each particular letter must have been delightful reading to the person who received it. Her readiness to talk and write of her domestic concerns is in laughable contrast to perhaps the most absurd of all Mr. Froude's absurdities. He so completely misunderstood her character that he asseverates her great anxiety always was to hide from Carlyle "with how much labour to herself his own comfort was secured" (ii. 47). This was the very reverse of the truth.

It may interest the reader to see a little more of what can yet be seen of the interior of Craigenputtock manor-house while Thomas Carlyle and his wife lived there. In letters and in talk she was fond of dwelling on the story of her early years of married life, and from all her accounts it is clear that, though far from well, she had better health

[1] Professor Ritchie's "Early Letters of J. W. C.," pp. 129, 130, and 148, 150.

and was in consequence happier then than ever afterwards or almost ever before. But on other topics her statements conflict a little.

She gave various reasons why she did not learn housekeeping before her marriage. Her worldly position was not at all such as to justify or excuse her ignorance. Her father had invested his savings in the purchase of Craigenputtock estate from his father, who was a farmer, burdened with a numerous and delicate family. The net value of the estate was under £200 a year.

The truth seems to have been what Mrs. Carlyle herself told Mr. Knighton :—

"My father was very anxious for a boy. He was disappointed that I was born a girl. However, he brought me up as much as possible as a boy. I was taught as a boy"—not at all an unprecedented thing in the Scotland of those days. There is one authentic instance accidentally known to me of a gentleman, nearly contemporary with Dr. Welsh, who advised his younger brother to give a daughter a first-class education equal to any man's, "as the best kind of dowry."

"When my mother remonstrated," continued Mrs. Carlyle, "he would say, 'at eighteen I will hand her over to you and you can teach her all a girl ought to know.' But Carlyle came, and it was forgotten. I did not know how to tack on a button when I got married, but I could write Latin."

Carlyle himself thought her mother was not then willing to allow her to interfere in household matters, and indeed it is very plain that mother and daughter harmonised indifferently, and that, for the sake of peace, the work of housekeeping while they lived together was done by Mrs. Welsh alone. At eighteen or twenty, Jane Baillie Welsh was not likely to be an apt pupil in such matters.

So she married and began to learn. An orator, it is often said, learns his business at the expense of his audience. A married lady, who begins to learn housekeeping after her marriage, has to do so at the expense of her husband. She may deserve sympathy, but surely a little is also due to the suffering man.

Let Mrs. Carlyle's own words be quoted. She laid the scene at Craigenputtock, and the time immediately after her marriage. From her early letters it seems likely that she should have said Edinburgh, but that does not matter:—

"A strapping, red-armed wench waited on us. 'It is market day to-day,' said she to me one day, bobbing in an uncouth curtsy. 'I am going to market; what meat shall I get?' I was reading at the time. 'Oh, anything you like,' was my reply. 'No, Ma'am, not as I like, as you like.' Well, we decided on something. But the cooking was execrable. Day after day our dinner was uneatable. 'My dear,' said Carlyle gravely to me at length, 'I am a philosopher, but I must have butcher's meat properly cooked for dinner.' I had a good cry after that. Then getting a cookery book I shut myself up with my pots and pans, and soon mastered the details of practical cookery."

"And so she became a cook," wails the sentimental reader. Not at all; it took her nearly two years to learn to distinguish beef from mutton, at least so she said to a lady in 1865. So far as has yet been discovered, she never cooked a dinner in her life. Assuredly she did *very* little cooking. She learned to know how it was done, that she might not be altogether helpless and unable to supervise.

"And if she *had* needed to cook, what matter?" it may be objected on the other hand. "Better women then she have cooked." Doubtless they have. She was delicate, however, and unable to cook much, and

at any rate our present business is not with what might, could, would, or should have been, but simply with what *was*. The facts were—as now stated.

She was disgusted to find soon that she needed to attend to her husband's buttons also. So she had to learn to sew. She had the common sense to learn—better late than never, and whatever defects other ladies might see in her household management, she did soon learn what was and is the essence of successful housekeeping, how to combine comfort with economy.

She showed great cleverness in keeping her expenditure well within the prescribed limits, without being in any way mean. One of the most interesting letters in Professor Ritchie's volume was written to Miss Stodart on the subject of ways and means, about eighteen months before she removed from Scotland to London. Her mother's father had died, and in this letter Mrs. Carlyle, discussing her mother's plans, incidentally mentioned that they lived "here very comfortably, keeping one maid, a boy, two horses, and a cow on considerably less money than her (Mrs. Welsh's) yearly income" of about £200 a year. This may surprise some readers, but it is a credible fact. There was no rent to be paid, it should be remembered, and money was worth more in Scotland then than it is now. The chief explanation of the mystery is of course thrift and good management.

Thus it was that Mrs. Carlyle deserved the boundless gratitude and affection she received from her husband. But, partly because of the state of her health, partly because she had not been taught housekeeping when young, whatever the reason, it is certain that she always did her household work by "fits and starts." It was so, more or less, to the end of her life, unless her servants and friends have combined to slander her, and she has co-operated by slandering herself.

In 1843, *e.g.*, she remarked incidentally that Geraldine Jewsbury was "oftener in the kitchen in one day than I am in a month."[1] A dozen other passages might be quoted to corroborate this. For the sake of brevity and variety *and* of Craigenputtock, take rather the statement of Mrs. Alexander Carlyle, her sister-in-law. As farmer's wife she lived in the farmhouse immediately adjoining the modest mansion-house there. What she said was in perfect harmony with the rest of the evidence. "Mrs. Carlyle," she said, "used often to do nothing at all except read and write for many days. Then she would wake up to the fact that the household work was in arrears, and have it all done in a spurt in a few days,—overfatiguing herself of course. Then she would rest several days, doing nothing but write letters. She always had a servant, often more than one; and so she never really needed to do hard work. Any one who looked at her hands could have seen that without being told!"

The want of method in Mrs. Carlyle's procedure naturally prevented her household duties becoming easy and habitual to her, and this was one of several reasons why she was ready to speak of them. Her husband praised her for doing such work, and that was what gave her heart to persevere and do it, and made her proud of it. Certainly, she never missed an opportunity of calling her husband's attention to her merits and herself.

If her letters and talk are accurate, it was not till she had been nearly two years married that she learned to sew. Then she took the opportunity of his absence from home to make him a waistcoat. He donned it when he returned. It fitted beautifully, at least so *she* said. The Carlyle of Froude's story would never have looked at his suffering meritorious wife—would perhaps

[1] "Letters and Memorials," i. 190.

have found fault with the waistcoat. The Carlyle of real life read at a glance the meaning of the smile on the bright face looking at him. "I was very proud of it," said Mrs. Carlyle to Mr. Knighton. "'You want praise for it,' said he, 'but this is only what every woman ought to be able to do. You do not want praise for doing your duty.' But I did, though," added Mrs. Carlyle prettily, and we may be sure she got what she wanted. What an amusing commentary her little story is on Mr. Froude's eternal drawl about Carlyle's "distracting" want of perception.

Unfortunately men of genius and insight are as rare in Scotland as elsewhere, and we can see but dimly through the eyes of others. What Lord Jeffrey saw we cannot yet know, may never know; but even from what Mr. Froude tells us of his letters it is clear that Froude has travestied Jeffrey's real opinions. Emerson happily was less at the artist's mercy. Emerson noted in his diary:—

"Carlyle and his wife live on beautiful terms. Their ways are very engaging." [1]

It is to be regretted that Alexander Carlyle did not put on paper any account of what he remembered of the life of his famous brother. The Carlyle family never courted publicity, and Mrs. Alexander Carlyle's remarks already quoted were extorted by Mr. Froude's romance. She did not appeal to the public at all, but she told her children the truth of the matter, and her opinion of Mr. Froude's story she summed up in a few words: "There is not a single truth in it,"—an emphatic feminine way of stating a conclusion which seems sound.

[1] October 1847, I now find. I quoted from memory; but as Emerson says they were then "very little changed from their old selves" at Craigenputtock, the quotation may stand.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MRS. CARLYLE GOES A-MILKING

IT is scarcely likely that many readers still hesitate whether to believe Mr. Froude or Thomas Carlyle. But a vague conclusion that Mr. Froude was wrong is not sufficient to eradicate all belief in his strange romance. In other words, a circumstantial lie needs to be contradicted circumstantially.

It was a great part of Carlyle's message to his age that there was no shame in any genuine, honest work. His wife shared his convictions and was encouraged by him to find an outlet for her energies in the discharge of simple domestic duties. She never had much work to do, and was as a rule keenly alive to the benefit she derived from doing what she did. She spoke of it frankly and truly, and enjoyed causing astonishment to the fine lady and fine gentleman species. Carlyle's ideas on this subject have become so general that it requires an effort to realise that sixty or seventy years ago he was as peculiar in upholding the dignity of work as in any other part of his teaching. His wife took pleasure in showing her agreement with him in this, and, especially in her later years, she loved to "shock" people by boasting of things she did which to them would have seemed disgraceful. She did so the more readily because Scotch "gentlewomen" in those days would have thought it no shame to do household work. It has never yet been sufficiently noticed that Carlyle's ideas about work were

to a certain extent based upon practical observation of what he had seen around him.

There was nothing wrong in Mrs. Carlyle's boasting; but it has been seriously misunderstood. As she was a delicate woman, it would have been disgraceful on her husband's part to allow her to injure her health by work for which she was unfit. Mr. Froude repeatedly alleges this against Carlyle, but Carlyle's wife never did so, and wherever Mr. Froude condescends to give details he can be proved to have taken his facts from his imagination.

For instance, he tells us: "She had to learn to milk the cows, in case the byre-woman should be out of the way, for fresh milk was the most essential article of Carlyle's diet" (ii. 46, 47). "She had . . . on occasions to milk the cows" (ii. 419).

This is a fiction. The only possible authority for it is Miss Jewsbury's narrative, which is now correctly printed in Professor Norton's edition of the "Reminiscences." Carlyle's remarks, already quoted, show that he pronounced her Craigenputtock stories "more mythical than any of the rest." His comments on the milking anecdote have already been read. "It could never have been necessary," "plenty of milkmaids within call." If Mrs. Carlyle ever milked, it must have been in frolic, was her husband's opinion.

Miss Jewsbury's report of Mrs. Carlyle's talk can be easily reconciled with what Carlyle says, and indeed in this, as in most other details, it would be unfair to Miss Jewsbury not to add that she gave no more than the hints on which Mr. Froude elaborated his romance. In this instance Miss Jewsbury tells how it once happened that Mrs. Carlyle's servant had got leave of absence to visit her parents, and was prevented by bad weather from returning at night. Thereupon a servant of the farmer's wife milked the cow; and next day, her own servant

being still absent, Mrs. Carlyle herself "began to try to milk the cow." This was apparently the first time she ever did so, even according to Miss Jewsbury.

"It was not at first easy," says Miss Jewsbury; "but at last she had the delight of hearing the milk trickle into the can. She said she felt quite proud of her success, and talked to the cow like a human creature."[1] The fact that she had milked the cow was not known to others at the time. There is no evidence except Miss Jewsbury's report of her talk to prove that she ever milked at all. The children of those who lived beside her there, though they often heard her spoken of, never heard of her milking. It may be pointed out that the amateur milker probably obtained so little milk that the loss of it was never noticed by the milkmaid. Mr. Froude seems to have fancied that any one can go into a cowshed and milk, that in Hamlet's phrase it is "as easy as to lie." He should have tried it!

From Carlyle's correspondence we learn that 1831 may have been the date of the servant's enforced absence.[2] It seems to have been either 1831 or some later date. The Carlyles went to Craigenputtock in 1828, so the fact that in 1831 Mrs. Carlyle had still to learn how to milk is what a lawyer would call "circumstantial evidence" against Mr. Froude's story.

It must be observed that Mr. Froude exaggerates grossly what Miss Jewsbury said.

(1) He represents the lady as compelled by circumstances to learn to milk, whereas Miss Jewsbury tells how on the preceding evening a milkmaid had "willingly" milked for her. Presumably the same milkmaid would have done it again if asked.

(2) He writes *cows*, not *cow*, a considerable difference.

(3) He says she "had" to do it "on occasions,"

[1] Rem., i. 65. [2] "Letters of T. C.," i. 253.

had to be, in short, a *reserve milkmaid*, at hand always in emergencies. Miss Jewsbury mentions only *one* occasion.

(4) Finally, observe the statement he made, that it was because *Carlyle* needed fresh milk that Mrs. Carlyle *had* to milk. This is pure invention, of a kind very common in Froude's story—very puzzling to a biographer of Mr. Froude. Happily Carlyle's biographers, seeing it to be palpably false, need not dwell upon it.

Mr. Froude's words and his mention of hardship and exposure raise visions of a delicate female figure, in short skirts, perhaps with bare feet, toiling wearily in the cowsheds attached to the bleak and lonely old house, and sinking gradually into chronic ill-health, unnoticed by the brute of a husband, who thought everything was well if he was himself comfortable.

Before precipitately shedding tears or cursing Carlyle, it may be as well to hear what the much-pitied woman herself wrote about this matter.

It should be first stated that while Carlyle's brother Alexander farmed Craigenputtock, Carlyle's wife appears to have got whatever milk she needed from the farm. When Alexander Carlyle left, and a new tenant came there, the Carlyles kept one cow for their own use as well as two horses; but they also had a maid and a boy, and lived on excellent terms with their immediate neighbour and tenant, the new farmer. So the milkmaids at the farm would still have been as much at Mrs. Carlyle's service on an emergency as when her brother-in-law was farmer. Mr. Froude himself prints (ii. 351, 352) a letter Mrs. Carlyle wrote in 1833, from which it appears that her chief occupation at the time of writing, and for some weeks before then, had been reading Italian "most of the day," and making a gown and a bonnet, and baking some loaves. Her letters to Miss Stodart (already quoted in discussing her health) show how she was

usually occupied during the last year of her stay at Craigenputtock.

But her health was then already broken, Mr. Froude mournfully intimates, and indeed he mentions the milking near the beginning of the "imprisonment on the moors." It was a chief part of the penal servitude which wrecked the New Griselda's health. Turn therefore by preference to what the unhappy woman wrote while Craigenputtock was still fresh to her. Fortunately for us, Miss Stodart had a lively curiosity and Mrs. Carlyle a ready pen. Happily pens and ink were not forbidden to the prisoner.

Mrs. Carlyle to Miss Stodart.

21*st Nov.* (Postmark, 1828).

"You would know what I am doing in these moors? Well, I am feeding poultry (at long intervals, and merely for form's sake), and I am galloping over the country on a bay horse, and baking bread, and improving my mind, and eating, and sleeping, and making, and mending, and, in short, wringing whatever good I can from the ungrateful soil of the world. On the whole, I was never more contented in my life; one enjoys such freedom and quietude here. Nor have we purchased this at the expense of other accommodations; for we have a good house to live in, with all the necessaries of life, and even some touch of the superfluities. 'Do you *attempt* to raise any corn?' the people ask us. Bless their hearts! We are planning strawberry-banks, and shrubberies, and beds of roses, with the most perfect assurance that they will grow. As to the corn, it grows to all lengths, without ever consulting the public about the matter. Another question that is asked me, so often as I am abroad, is, how many cows I keep; which ques-

tion, to my eternal shame as a housewife, I have never yet been enabled to answer, having never ascertained up to this moment, whether there are seven cows or eleven. *The fact is, I take no delight in cows, and have happily no concern with them.* Carlyle and I are not playing farmers here, which were a rash and unnatural attempt. My brother-in-law is the farmer, and fights his own battle, in his own new house, which one of his sisters manages for him.

"In the autumn I had enough to mind without counting cows, the house being often full of visitors."[1]

Carlyle's explicit statement is therefore in harmony with his wife's statements and the rest of the evidence, so we must conclude that Mrs. Carlyle never *needed* to milk and did not do so "on occasions." It is just possible that once, in the accidental absence of her servant, she may have amused herself by dispensing with a milk-maid's services, and milked *one* cow.

[1] Professor Ritchie's "Early Letters of J. W. C.," pp. 136, 137. Italics mine.

CHAPTER XXIX

MRS. CARLYLE ON HER KNEES

"IT might happen," wrote Mr. Froude, "that she had to black the grates to the proper polish, or even scour the floors while Carlyle looked on encouragingly with his pipe" (ii. p. 47). Let us take these two statements separately.

The first is a fiction and an absurd one. The Craigenputtock house had steel grates in the dining-room and the drawing-room, and Mrs. Carlyle would have as readily allowed Mr. Froude to blacken her carving knives as to blacken her grates. Miss Jewsbury reports how, on the occasion already mentioned, when her servant was absent and storm-stayed, "the house had beautiful and rather elaborate steel grates; it seemed a pity to let them rust, so she cleaned them carefully, and then looked round for wood to kindle the fire," and not finding it at hand sent her husband to fetch it.

Assuming the "mythical" narrative to be correct in this instance, what it tells us is that on this occasion Mrs. Carlyle cleaned the steel of her grates.

The second statement, about having to scour the floors, is even more ludicrous than the first. As before, the only authority is Miss Jewsbury's narrative, and, as before, it must be received with caution. But let us suppose it true. Mention of scouring floors occurs only in the description of Mrs. Carlyle's doings on the day, or one day and part of another, when her servant was storm-

stayed. It is clear that Mrs. Carlyle delighted in the opportunity of doing household work with her own hands on that occasion,—a fact which alone suggests to any candid reader that she did not do it daily. Let now Miss Jewsbury, reporting Mrs. Carlyle's talk, tell us the conclusion of that day's work,—

"Mrs. Carlyle got on easily with all the housework, and kept the whole place bright and clean except the large kitchen or house place, which grew to need scouring very much. At length she took courage to attack it. Filling up two large pans of hot water, she knelt down and began to scrub; having made a clear space round the large arm-chair by the fireside, she called Mr. Carlyle and installed him with his pipe to watch her progress." (She always hid her labour, said Mr. Froude!) "He regarded her beneficently, and gave her from time to time words of encouragement. Half the large floor had been successfully cleansed, and she felt anxious of making a good ending, when she heard a gurgling sound. For a moment or two she took no notice, but it increased and there was a sound of something falling upon the fire, and instantly a great black thick stream came down the chimney, pouring like a flood along the floor, taking precisely the lately cleaned portion first in its course, and extinguishing the fire. It was too much; she burst into tears. The large fire, made up to heat the water, had melted the snow on the top of the chimney, it came down mingling with the soot, and worked destruction to the kitchen floor. *All that could be done was to dry up the flood. She had no heart to recommence her task.*[1] She rekindled the fire and got tea ready. That same night her maid came back, having done the impossible to get home. She clasped Mrs. Carlyle in her arms, crying and laughing,

[1] Italics mine, D. W.

saying, 'Oh, my dear mistress, my dear mistress, I dreamed ye were deed!'"[1]

Be it noted that Carlyle said he remembered nothing of that scouring of the kitchen floor. Granting, however, that Miss Jewsbury correctly reports what Mrs. Carlyle said, and granting that Mrs. Carlyle was accurate in what she said, it appears that Mrs. Carlyle never once scoured a floor, but only once tried, and then failed, her husband probably dissuading her from further attempts.

Yet the words of Mr. Froude in making these two statements clearly imply that Mrs. Carlyle had to be always ready to black the grates and scour the floors! Nay, his argument is that it was such hardships that ruined her health.

"No ordinary woman," it might be said, "would milk a cow even once, or clean two grates or try to scour a floor, if she had not been made to do so by her husband, the brute!"

Mr. Froude clearly thought so, but he must have known sensible people would think otherwise, or he would not have added to the truth. The answer is twofold. First, in a quiet country place it *is* possible that even an ordinary woman, who had no children to occupy her time, might do such things to "vary the monotony of existence," as a bright old Scotch lady once said. Secondly, Mrs. Carlyle was not quite an ordinary woman. When she revisited Haddington, at the beginning of the forty-ninth year of her age, she went to the churchyard and arrived there before the sexton, who was to open the gate for her. Whereupon, she says, "I made a dash at the wall, some seven feet high I should think, and dropped safe on the inside." When she departed from Haddington she met an old gentleman in the railway carriage and recognised him. "I laid my hand on his

[1] *i.e.* dead. Quotation from "Reminiscences," vol. i. pp. 65, 66.

arm, turning away my face, and said: 'Thank God here is one person I feel no difficulty about!' 'I don't know you,' he said, in his old blunt way; 'who are you?' 'Guess!' 'Was it you who got over the churchyard wall this morning? I saw a stranger lady climb the wall, and I said to myself, that's Jeannie Welsh! No other woman would climb the wall instead of going in at the gate. Are you Jeannie Welsh?'" So the mutual recognition was completed in a way likely to convince the most sceptical and malicious critic of Carlyle that Carlyle's wife might have milked a cow, and tried to scour a floor, and done many other things in pure frolic.

It is a well-authenticated fact that she was to the end of her life, and in spite of ill-health, a most high-spirited woman. Whenever at all well in health, she was as ready for a frolic as a girl. Fancy a lady, in the forty-ninth year of her age, climbing over a high graveyard wall in pure fun! This is only one of many similar incidents which show how frolicsome, natural, and happy-hearted she was,—a fact which no ingenuity can ever reconcile with Mr. Froude's story of the ill-treated wife.

Her father's death and then her mother's, and her own ill-health and childlessness were practically the only sorrows she ever had; nor can it be said that she suffered more than is common. As a wife her lot was enviable, and no one knew that better than herself.

CHAPTER XXX

ENTERTAINING LORD JEFFREY AND STARVING ON POTATOES

OSTENSIBLY summarising what Carlyle wrote in the "Reminiscences" about the first visit of the Jeffreys to Craigenputtock, Mr. Froude mentions "with what astonishment" Jeffrey "learnt that his dinner had been cooked for him by his hostess's own hands" (vol. ii. p. 40). Turning to the passage he refers to (Rem., ii. 245, 246), we read, not without astonishment: "I remember nothing so well as the consummate art with which my Dear One played the domestic field-marshal, and spread out our exiguous resources, without fuss or bustle, to cover everything with a coat of hospitality and even elegance and abundance; I have been in houses ten times, nay a hundred times, as rich, where things went not so well. . . . She was so true and frank withal; . . . one day at dinner, I remember, Jeffrey admired the fritters or bits of pancakes he was eating; and she let him know, not without some vestige of shock to him, that she had made them. 'What; you! Twirl up the frying pan, and catch them in the air?' Even so, my high friend; and you may turn it over in your mind!" If the Jeffreys got no dinner but the "fritters" Mrs. Carlyle made they must have fared badly. It may be added, however, that Mrs. Carlyle, writing shortly afterwards to Miss Stodart, described the Jeffreys' visit, and added that she then had at Craigenputtock Grace Macdonald, "just the cleverest servant I ever had occasion to know."

An eminent living novelist naïvely wrote, not long ago: "In my book the humorous effects are mostly unconscious." Mr. Froude might have made a similar remark. Carlyle wrote to his brother in 1831 :—

"I know not how a man without some degree of prostitution could live by it (the *trade* of literature), unless indeed he were situated like me, and could live upon potatoes and point if need were—as indeed need has been, is, and will be, with better men than me."

"Potatoes and point" is said to be the name of an Irish banquet, consisting of potatoes and salt only. You dip your potato in the salt, and merely *point* it at a solitary herring, suspended overhead out of reach.

"I will not leave literature," wrote Carlyle. "Nay, had I but two potatoes in the world, and one true idea, I should hold it my duty to part with one potato for paper and ink, and live upon the other till I got it written."

Whereupon Mr. Froude moralises as if the last extremity had been already reached, and, with quite unconscious humour, shows how in his head hyperbole hardened into history.

"In this period of 'potatoes and point' and 'farthing rushlights' for illumination after dark, the reader may be anxious to know how Mrs. Carlyle was getting on. Little can be said about this, for Carlyle tells next to nothing of her save in *sad letters to Jeffrey*" . . . which it is astounding to find this painful biographer *confessing he never read.*[1]

The letters "have not been preserved," he says, he "only" "conjectured" what was in them, though he states, as if he had read them, that they were "sad," and told about Mrs. Carlyle. Perhaps he "conjectured" that they dealt with the number of potatoes still remaining, and the decline of Mrs. Carlyle's health while she

[1] Mr. Froude's "T. C.," 1795–1835, ii. 147. Italics mine.

cooked (alas! only potatoes now, perhaps potato fritters?), and "washed and scoured and mended shoes and clothes," and "blacked grates," upon such scanty diet. "We are left," says Mr. Froude, depressed by the thought of what *must have been* in the "sad" letters he never read, "we are left pretty much to guess her condition; and of guesses, the fewer that are ventured the better." Too true!

There never was a more amusing proof of the truth of this platitude than the guess Mr. Froude ventured about these letters. *Carlyle who wrote them* says, in the "Reminiscences" (ii. p. 253), that they were *all cheerful.* Mr. Froude, who *never read them*, assures us they were *sad*, and then the wiseacre moralises on his own wisdom in not guessing more!

It is perhaps necessary to add that this is a fair sample of the absurdity of this part of Mr. Froude's romance. The "potatoes and point" haunted the poor man's fancy like a nightmare, and he says of the Carlyles, "they were in real extremity" in 1831, and gives many pathetic details, nearly all false.

He deepens the gloom by describing Carlyle's brother, Alexander, who had been farming Craigenputtock, as no longer able to afford the rent, and "thrown upon his (Carlyle's) hands, while he seemingly was scarce able to take care of himself and his wife," so that even the potatoes were likely to fail! "Alick by his four years of occupation was out of pocket £300." If Mr. Froude had read carefully the whole of the letter in which this last fact is mentioned he would have discovered something more. It was a letter from Carlyle to his brother, the doctor, and contains some news still likely to be news to the most patient student of Mr. Froude's writings: "It appears, in my dislike of 'vain repetitions,' I have gone too far, and never *once* stated that Alick was to stay, and look after his crop, here. He is now tenant of

our Peat-house; which . . . he has brushed up into a very tolerable cottage, with two windows, plastered brace (chimney-piece), wooden floor, ceiling; wherein he calculates on passing the summer well enough '*for lodgings.*' Poor Alick! Though fortunate beyond expectation in the Roup (auction sale) of his stock and so forth, he finds himself to have lost upwards of £300 since he came hither, that is, at the rate of some £80 a year, beyond his whole labour bodily and spiritual! We all think it extremely fortunate that he has now finally done with farming Craigenputtock; for which enterprise he is evidently not adapted. *There is still something like £400 left him, with which he will be enabled to stock Dairlaw Hills, or some other farm, next year. . . .*"[1]

A previous letter explained that the rent of Craigenputtock farm (£200) was too high in Carlyle's opinion. It had been given up by his brother and let to another farmer for £170.

During the very months when they were "in real extremity," Carlyle says in a letter to his brother in London: "Alick and I were down at the Kirk on Sunday (I went, for the first time these many months, because of the *Irish Collection*)." It is hardly likely that, if the two brothers, "were in real extremity," both with wives to support, Carlyle would have gone several miles to attend Church "because of the *Irish Collection.*" Moreover, impatient of possible delay in getting subscribers for the famous seal he caused to be sent to Goethe, Carlyle then wrote to his brother John, to "oversee" the matter, saying that "in any case" "we three" (himself, and his brother, and Fraser of *Fraser's Magazine*, apparently) could buy and send the seal. If it were inconvenient to his brother to contribute just then, Carlyle said he would

[1] "Letters of T. C.," i. 286. These last italics are mine.

pay his brother's contribution—a rather rash undertaking for a man reduced to potatoes!

Mr. Froude remarks, with pathos almost ludicrous: "It is with a feeling like what the Scots mean by *wae* that one reads the letters that Jeffrey was writing during the worst of it (the 'potatoes and point' year) to Mrs. Carlyle. . . . To her he continued to write lightly and brilliantly on London gaieties and his own exploits in the House of Commons." It seems to have never occurred to Mr. Froude that Jeffrey was a genial man of tact and even of genius, personally cognisant of the life the Carlyles led at Craigenputtock. Such a man was not likely to write as Mr. Froude says he did, if the actual situation at Craigenputtock had been as Mr. Froude says it was.

Mr. Froude tells how Carlyle, going to London that summer, "so far swallowed his pride as to accept after all a loan of £50 from Jeffrey for his expenses" (ii. 161).

This is another blunder which it is almost inconceivable that Mr. Froude could have made, if he had carefully read the "Reminiscences," where the simple truth of the matter is stated by Carlyle himself.

Jeffrey offered Carlyle an annuity of £100. It was declined with thanks. Jeffrey continued to write in a friendly way, and, Carlyle tells us, "*I once, some months after this* (*offer of an annuity of* £100) borrowed £100 from him (my pitiful bits of 'Periodical-Literature' incomings having gone awry, as they were too liable to do), but was able, I still remember with what satisfaction, to repay punctually within a few weeks: and this was all of pecuniary chivalry *we* two ever had between us" (Rem. ii. 255).

Any banker in Dumfries or Annan would have readily lent Carlyle then far more than £100; but it was more convenient to borrow from Jeffrey, and it was the act of

a true gentleman to do so, were it only to let Jeffrey feel that he did not resent the offer of an annuity. Jeffrey apparently did fear some such thing, for at that very time he wrote to Carlyle, "my dear proud friend," explaining what he wished to do for Dr. Carlyle and saying "trust me, then . . . do not fear that I will either wilfully or thoughtlessly do anything either to injure or degrade your brother. I will have the fear of your philosophy before my eyes, and have little apprehension of ultimately giving you pain by my decision" (Norton's "Letters of T. C.," i. p. 281).

The whole transaction was highly creditable to both Jeffrey and Carlyle, and it is difficult to say which of them would have been the more astonished to read Mr. Froude's account of it. Speechless amazement, followed by peals of laughter, would probably have been their only comment.

Carlyle had a hard struggle. The years he spent at Craigenputtock were years of considerable commercial depression, and his income was small. Commercial depression passed away, but many more years had to pass before Carlyle's mature intellectual work yielded him even such a moderate income as he had earned before his marriage. In 1849 he remarked to Duffy: "He might say, were it of any moment at all, that though he had a certain faculty of work in him, the woman who manufactured the last sensational novel had probably got more money for a couple of her strange ventures than he had been paid by the whole bookselling craft from the beginning to that hour." However, as he told another friend (Lockhart), he had found a good revenue in Scotch thrift. He helped his brothers and sisters generously, when help was needed, and he was enabled to do so by practising the self-denial he preached. Carlyle "had no amusements," as Mr. Espinasse has remarked with truth. But

his self-denial was not inflicted on his wife in the manner Mr. Froude alleges. She was always able to allow her mother to enjoy the whole income of her Craigenputtock estate, while she earned her husband's gratitude by making whatever he could afford for their own house suffice. During the years when his income was smallest she practically got it all, and she never was refused anything she asked and he could give. She was delicate, however, and for that reason she never thought of doing what is called "hard" work. She exacted and received the attentions due to a semi-invalid nearly all her life. So far from ever being in lack of food or necessary comforts, there is no evidence that she at any time even thought of dispensing with a servant. Nor was she ever much harassed with pecuniary anxieties, though always studious to be thrifty.

"She had no misgivings at all," wrote her husband, describing how they went to live in Chelsea with "£280 to front London with"; and again he wrote, "My Darling rolled it all over upon *me;* cared not one straw about it; only asked for assurance or promissory engagement from me, '*How* little then?' and never failed to make it liberally and handsomely do. Honour to her (beyond the ownership of California, I say now); and thanks to Poverty that showed me how noble, worshipful, and dear she was."

The true story of the early married life of the Carlyles is one of the most inspiriting in the whole course of modern history; but Mr. Froude does not tell the truth, for he never took the trouble to discover what it was.

If he were alive, he would wonder perhaps at objection being taken to what he called (in reference to Miss Jewsbury's narrative) "the slight alterations of form which stories naturally receive in repetition."

His own "slight alterations of form" consisted in

saying a delicate lady had to milk cows occasionally, because she chose to amuse herself by milking a cow once; in saying she had to scour floors and black grates because once when her servant was accidentally detained at a distance by a storm, she chose to clean two steel grates, and tried unsuccessfully to scour a floor; and in saying she cooked a dinner when she had only made some fritters. The list might be extended indefinitely; but it will be more profitable to turn without more delay to another part of the story and see how our new Defoe develops his plot.

CHAPTER XXXI

CARLYLE CARICATURED AS A DOMESTIC BULLY

THERE is something so revolting and despicable in the character of a bully, that no mistake of Mr. Froude's has done more harm to Carlyle's memory than the statement that Carlyle bullied his wife. He did not use this word, but he exhausted his fancy and the resources of the English language in saying this in other words. Thus he tells us that Carlyle was "proud—one may say savagely proud. . . . His temper had been ungovernable from his childhood; he had the irritability of a dyspeptic man of genius; and when the Devil, as he called it, had possession of him, those whose comfort he ought most to have studied were the most exposed to the storm: he who preached so wisely 'on doing the duty which lay nearest to us,' forgot his own instructions, and made no adequate effort to cast the Devil out. . . ." "He might repent afterwards of these ebullitions; he usually did repent. But repentance could not take away the sting of the passionate expressions, which fastened in the memory by the metaphors with which they were barbed, especially as there was no amendment, and the offence was repeated on the next temptation."[1]

The plain English of all this is,—Carlyle bullied his wife. We are asked to believe her spirit was so

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795-1835, vol. ii. pp. 471, 472, and vol. i. p. 314.

broken by his treatment of her that she neglected her health.[1] His lack of "tenderness" aggravated the evil effects of the hard work at Craigenputtock which, in Mr. Froude's imagination, had made her a chronic invalid. From the "imprisonment on the Dumfriesshire moors"[2] she was in time delivered, but from that affliction she was never free. Here is an extract relating to a time when the poor lady was about sixty years of age:—

"From first to last he was surrounded by people who allowed him his own way, because they felt his superiority—who found it a privilege to minister to him as they became more and more conscious of his greatness—who, when their eyes were open to his defects, were content to put up with them, as the mere accidents of a nervously sensitive organisation.

"This was enough for friends who could be amused by peculiarities from which they did not personally suffer. But for those who actually lived with him—for his wife especially, on whom the fire-sparks fell first and always, and who could not escape from them—the trial was hard. . . . Affection did not prevent outbursts of bilious humour . . ." &c. &c.,[3] with a melancholy monotony like the howling of jackals. It is so that Mr. Froude tells the story of Carlyle's life. Even an ordinary bully might have had mercy on an old and invalid wife, who had made herself an invalid for his sake. But Carlyle spared her not,—according to Mr. Froude.

It is creditable to the instincts of the English-speaking races that they have refused to honour one who was capable of such conduct. Respect for Carlyle

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C," 1795–1835, vol. ii. p. 422.
[2] Ibid., vol. ii. p. 416.
[3] Ibid., 1834–1881, vol. ii. p. 233.

became impossible after this foul libel had been published under such circumstances as almost to compel belief. Only they could continue to honour Carlyle who knew him well, or who were able to guess that the story which Mr. Froude told was untrue.

Sir C. G. Duffy remarks with surprise, "It is sometimes forgotten how completely posterity has pardoned in Carlyle's peers characteristics which are treated as unpardonable crimes in him. His sense of personal superiority was not so constant or so vigilant as Wordsworth's, though the poet was perhaps more cautious in the exhibition of it; Burke was far more liable to explosions of passion, and Johnson harsher and more peremptory every day of his life, than Carlyle at rare intervals in some fit of dyspepsia."[1] The explanation seems simple. Duffy was an intimate friend of the Carlyles, and so he knew the facts which the public must learn from—Sir C. G. Duffy and others. *Till* he and others began to make the truth known, no one could be blamed for thinking that Carlyle was, as Mr. Froude described him, a man who bullied his delicate wife in a detestable and cowardly manner. Every manly man who thinks so must loathe Carlyle, and be glad of any excuse to think evil of him. As Mr. Samuel Laing said, tacitly, I think, but not expressly referring to Carlyle,—"we call a man who strikes a woman or child with his fist a brute; what is he if he strikes them daily and hourly, ten times more cruelly, with his tongue? A ten times greater brute."

The truth of the matter, however, is that Mr. Froude's story is a complete fabrication. As Byron's heroes all savoured of Byron, so Mr. Froude's all savoured of Mr. Froude. The central figure in his "Thomas Carlyle" was constructed out of his imagination,

[1] Duffy's "Conversations with Carlyle," Part II. p. 51.

and resembles what he thought James Anthony Froude would have been under the peculiar circumstances. It is not a likeness of Carlyle. It is a caricature without either humour or likeness.

Mrs. Carlyle, too, he almost revered, without understanding her. He interpreted her figures of speech literally, with results almost ludicrous. He gives us such a description of her as Sancho Panza might have given of Don Quixote. In his pages the New Griselda develops in an incredible manner into a new Donna Inez. Carlyle's "was the soft heart, and hers the stern one."[1] Almost "wishing her husband not divorced but dead," "she kept a journal where his faults were noted." The humour of the situation is all unconscious. We may sometimes laugh *at* the author, but never once laugh *with* him.

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, vol. ii. p. 171.

CHAPTER XXXII

MR. FROUDE AS A "LEERICAL" WITNESS

FIRST of all, Mr. Froude is a witness against himself. He says that Carlyle's expressions "fastened in the memory by the metaphors with which they were barbed." That is true. Many expressions of Carlyle have been for that reason remembered, and even Thackeray and Tennyson, dear friends though they were till death, winced under casual remarks of Carlyle which "fastened in the memory by the metaphors with which they were barbed." If, then, Carlyle addressed angry or censorious words to his wife they would be likely to be remembered also. Mr. Froude said such words were used, but he does not quote any. Why not, unless there were none to quote? He says with perfect accuracy that if he erred it was "in excess, not in defect," when any evil could be said of Carlyle.[1] With charming candour he tells us why,—"It is the nature of men to dwell on the faults of those who stand above them."[1] That is true. He might have added with equal force that it is the nature of vain men, who have long paid court to those who stand above them, to be ready to imagine faults without sufficient cause.

There is no reason to suppose that Mr. Froude suppressed anything he could tell to the disadvantage of Carlyle. He repeatedly assures us of the contrary. He himself explains how the angry words of Carlyle would be more likely to be remembered than those of another

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795–1835, vol. ii. p. 470.

man. And yet he does not quote one really angry word addressed to the suffering woman by the man who bullied her for forty years!

Mr. Froude also gives his own experience, carefully suppressing the criticisms he received when he had made Carlyle angry by gross inaccuracy, or by needlessly offending religious prejudices. "In private," he wrote, "I found him impatient of nothing but of being bored; gentle, quiet, tolerant; *sadly*-humoured, but never *ill*-humoured; ironical but without the savageness. and when speaking of persons always scrupulously just. He saw through the 'clothes' of a man into what he actually was. But the sharpest censure was always qualified. He would say, 'If we knew how he came to be what he is, poor fellow, we should not be hard with him.'

"But he talked more of things than of persons, and on every variety of subject. . . .

"He was so quiet, so unexaggerative, so well-humoured in these private conversations, that I could scarcely believe he was the same person whom I used to hear declaim in the Pamphlet time. Now and then, if he met an acquaintance who might say a foolish thing, there would come an angry sputter or two; but he was generally so patient, so forbearing, that I thought age had softened him, and I said so one day to Mrs. Carlyle. She laughed and told him of it. 'I wish,' she said, 'Froude had seen you an hour or two after you seemed to him so lamblike.' But I am relating what he was as I knew him, and as I always found him from first to last."[1]

Evidently Mr. Froude imputed harshness to Carlyle, partly because of his own unfortunate experiences, which he has not mentioned, but chiefly because of what Mrs. Carlyle used to say. Mrs. Carlyle loved to speak of her husband, for she loved him, and she always received close

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, vol. ii. pp. 257, 267.

attention when she spoke of him. She excelled also in a species of humour which is more popular in America than in England,—a humorous exaggeration and even inversion of the truth. Better judges than Mr. Froude, with a sense of humour, knew better than he how to interpret what she said.

She boasted in 1845: "Decidedly, I was meant to have been a subaltern of the Daily Press—not a 'penny lady'" (Scotch name for a certain class of female philanthropists), "but a penny-a-liner; for it is not only a faculty with me, but a necessity of my nature to make a great deal out of nothing."[1] Moreover, she dearly loved to humbug sentimental persons, and sneer at them afterwards. "And then, bless me, he grew *leerical*,"[2] she used to say, describing such a one.[3] "Mrs. Carlyle pours oil into your wounds," said the sentimental Miss Jewsbury once to Mr. Espinasse, "but it is oil of vitriol."[4] Once she plainly told Miss Jewsbury, "the sentimental is always a got-up thing," a "*do* at the bottom of it." But she probably never was intimate enough with Mr. Froude to have occasion to speak so to him. Mr. Froude's deficiency in humour apparently tickled her sense of the ridiculous, and much fun she must have had at his expense.

It is scarcely needful to multiply proofs of this. One amusing instance is given by Professor Masson. Mrs. Carlyle had fallen and hurt herself in 1863. One effect

[1] "Letters and Memorials," i. 349.

[2] "Leerical," a pun. This is the Scotch pronunciation of lyrical, and emphasising that pronunciation suggested *leer*, and the slang word leery—also used in Scotland. In Mrs. C.'s vocabulary "leerical" meant that the unfortunate gentleman grew lyrical, *i.e.* was sentimental and full of fine words, and was insincere, and quite unaware that he was being laughed at.

[3] Statement of an intimate friend of Mrs. C.

[4] Espinasse's "Literary Recollections," p. 134.

of the accident was that she could not close her mouth. The doctor and Mrs. Carlyle agreed, Mr. Froude tells us himself,[1] to conceal from Carlyle how seriously she had been hurt; and Carlyle, entering her bedroom during her illness and seeing her mouth open, advised her to shut it. Mr. Froude moralises painfully on the "distracting want of perception" which, as this showed, "characterised him."

However provoking this may have been at the time, Professor Masson assures us, and none who knew her doubt, that the fun of the situation was uppermost in her mind when she used to tell the story afterwards.[2] It is not unlikely that, if she saw Mr. Froude's long face lengthening when she told it in his hearing, she may have enlarged and embellished the narrative, to get more fun out of him. At all events, when Carlyle's wife and her doctor both conspired in kindness to deceive him as to the serious nature of the injuries she received by her fall, there certainly was no obtuseness on his part in not knowing that her injuries prevented her from shutting her mouth. The only "distracting want of perception" was on the part of the melancholy sentimental gentleman who saw no fun in the situation; and indeed, so far as can be discovered, seldom saw any fun in anything all the days of his life.

Mrs. Carlyle wrote to her old friend, Miss Stodart, not many years after coming to live in London, about the "got-up" sentiment suitable to that locality, and told her how she herself "with a good deal of effort" had occasionally "got up a sentiment," worth naming "friendship in these days." "They call me '*sweet*,'" she wrote, "and '*gentle*'; and some of the men go the length of calling me 'ENDEARING' and I laugh in my

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, ii. p. 272.

[2] Professor Masson's "Carlyle Personally," pp. 19, 20.

sleeve." "Here," remarks the learned professor who edits these letters, "there is a very rude little sketch, in the 'symbolical' stage of art, representing a female figure, whose extended fingers touch the nose." [1]

She did not know Mr. Froude then, but all who ever knew her intimately would probably agree that that "very rude little sketch, in the 'symbolical' stage of art," would be an admirable illustration for his "Thomas Carlyle." It would elucidate many parts of his book, and even fling light on p. 264, vol. ii. (1834–1881), where he modestly prints a letter she wrote to himself. "Partly, I believe, at my instance," he says, "Mrs. Carlyle invited Colenso to one of her tea-parties," but Colenso visibly failed to please her. So Mr. Froude wrote to her on the subject, and was comforted in these soothing terms:—

"Oh, my dear Mr. Froude, I surely couldn't have looked so bored as that. . . ." (Then follow some sarcastic sentences about "that anomalous bishop.") "But I was really not bored that day. *You* came with him; *you* were there; and without meaning to say anything pretty (which is far from my line)"—oh, very far indeed!—"I am always so pleased to see you, that were you to come accompanied by the—the—*first gentleman in England*, I should rather than that you didn't come at all."

Mr. Froude must have been sensibly touched by this affectionate epistle. No wonder he sent Mrs. Carlyle his photograph not many months afterwards. One almost wonders why de did not send it by return of post.

Certainly Mr. Froude pleased Mrs. Carlyle. He excelled most men in making himself agreeable at tea-parties. It is equally certain that she was also, quietly, not a little amused by him—so self-satisfied and sentimental, yet so thoroughly conscious of being sympathetic and sensible. A favourite servant once got a hint to

[1] "Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle," p. 274.

watch his demeanour for the fun of the thing, and, that she might the better enjoy the fun, she was shown by Mrs. Carlyle with a smile one of Mr. Froude's complacent letters and the photo he had sent her. This was *after* the date of her letter, which he prints so proudly. Assuredly, that "very rude little sketch, in the 'symbolical' stage of art," is an illustration much needed for his invaluable biography.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THOMAS CARLYLE AT HOME IN CHELSEA

MISS CAROLINE FOX in her "Journal" remarks of Mrs. Carlyle: "She plays all manner of tricks on her husband, telling wonderful stories of him in his presence, founded almost solely on her bright imagination; he, poor man, panting for an opportunity to stuff in a negation, but all to no purpose; having cut him up sufficiently, she would clear the course. They are a very happy pair." This was in 1840. In the following year Miss Fox reports John Sterling's opinion: "Of Mrs. Carlyle's quizzeries, he thinks she puts them forth as such evident fictions, that they cannot mislead. . . ."[1]

Her "quizzeries" could not mislead John Sterling or Miss Fox, but did mislead Mr. Froude. Browning and Tennyson might also be quoted against him, for it is now known that their opinions were similar to that of Miss Fox. But direct evidence of facts is better than opinions, and here is the testimony of Professor Masson:—

"They mistake Carlyle utterly who do not know that to the end, with all his vehemence in indignation and invective, and with a stately dignity of manner which repelled irreverent familiarity, and with which the most impudent did not dare to trifle, there was a vast fund in him of what could be described as the homeliest and most genial good-fellowship and the richest old Scottish heartiness. It was not only his faculty of

[1] "Caroline Fox, her Journals and Letters," vol. i. pp. 150 and 232.

humour. . . . I have heard the echoes of Sloane Street ring with his great laugh many and many a night between ten and eleven o'clock. . . . But better still was the proof of the depths of pleasant kindliness in his nature, his power of being actually happy himself and of making others happy, in some of those evening hours I have spent with him in the well-remembered dining-room in Chelsea. Then, both of us, or one of us, reclining on the hearth-rug, that the wreaths of pipe-smoke might innocently ascend the chimney, and Mrs. Carlyle seated near at some piece of work, and public questions laid aside or his vehemences over them having already subsided for that evening, how comfortable he would be, how simple, how husbandly in his looks round to his wife when she interjected one of her bright and witty remarks, how happy in the flow of casual fireside chat about all things and sundry, the quoting of quaint snatches of ballad or lyric, or the resuscitation of old Scottish memories!"[1]

"No man is a hero to his valet," it is said, but Carlyle was a hero to such of his servants as have been discovered. One still living in the south of Scotland spoke of him recently with the most tender admiration, based chiefly upon his gentle and affectionate demeanour to his wife. A few sentences may be quoted here from her statements:—

"Mrs. Carlyle," she said, "was fond of talking as if Master was a terrible person. But he was not so at all. I remember she used to say, when Mr. Carlyle had not slept at night, and was 'sleeping in,' 'No noise—we might as well be all lying in our beds with our throats cut as waken Mr. Carlyle.' But it was of herself she might have said that! She slept badly and *could* make a fuss. Master never did make a fuss, but was always gentle, always the same. . . . He needed so little—just to be left

[1] David Masson's "Edinburgh Sketches and Memories," pp. 331, 332.

alone and not worried about trifles. Clean shirts, socks, &c., he was supplied with at fixed hours, never changed. I attended to all that, and never a word was needed. His great regularity made it most easy to serve him. I could have served him for ever; but I would not have stayed many months with Mrs. Carlyle alone. She was very affectionate, but as changeable as a child. . . . She did whatever she liked in the house, and used to be jealous if Master showed a liking for any one. She wished to be all-in-all to him, and I used to think she did not like his fondness for his sister Jean and so she praised Mary (Mrs. Austin) to the disadvantage of Jean!" (This guess was curiously happy, as might be proved if needful). "Mrs. Carlyle, though she could be nasty about any one, even her dearest friends, never was nasty to Master or about him. She was devotedly fond of him, and would speak to me about him and boast, 'I knew at once, when nobody else did, how great a man he is,—what an extraordinary man!'" On one point this witness was most emphatic: "There was never anything approaching a quarrel or high words between them, and they hid nothing."

Of course Mrs. Carlyle had her troubles with Carlyle at home,—no married lady is without them. But the most serious authentic troubles she ever had were unutterably trifling. He would insist on giving a favourite cat "bits of meat and driblets of milk" at breakfast, dinner, and tea, "to the ruination of carpets and hearthrugs"; so at least wrote the afflicted wife to a new servant, sending her instructions by post when she was herself away from home. "I have over and over again," she continued, "pointed out to him the stains she had made, but he won't believe them her doings!" So Mrs. Carlyle had to give orders to "shut up the creature" at mealtimes.

She had another similar cause of complaint about the time she wrote her journal. It was quite as serious as anything which *is* in her journal, and can *not* be proved fanciful. Mr. Knighton and his wife heard her talk about her dog Nero:—

"'He is extravagantly fond of me; but only very moderately of Carlyle. . . . But he cannot expect otherwise. Carlyle delights in torturing him, which he calls playing with him. He snaps the tongs at him, and Nero does not like that. He once even tied an empty tin to his tail, and sent the poor dog scampering all over the house in great terror. It was cruel of him to do that—absolutely cruel—and I told him so. I told him it was an amusement unfit for a philosopher—low, degrading.'

"'And what then?' asked Mr. Knighton.

"'Oh, he only laughed all the more at Nero and at me. But he did not do it again,' continued Mrs. Carlyle."[1]

So far was Mrs. Carlyle from being bullied, that her own talk about her husband's violence was merely indirect boasting. That she could "do what she liked" with him was as self-evident to all who were intimately acquainted with their daily life as to their servants; and she boasted about his occasional outbursts against impudent visitors, &c., much as a man who performs with wild animals might boast of their ferocity.

"She sat a gentle invalid on the sofa," reports Moncure Conway (p. 53). "When Carlyle's mood was stormiest, her voice could in an instant allay it; the lion was led as by a little child."

"It was one of Mrs. Carlyle's habits," says Professor Masson, "just because of her boundless respect and affection for her husband, to play in imagination with his little eccentricities, and amuse her friends and bewilder

[1] *Contemporary Review*, June 1881.

his worshippers with satirical anecdotes at his expense. One of the pleasantest sights in the Cheyne Row household on a winter evening was Carlyle himself seated in a chair by the fire, or reclining on the hearth-rug, pipe in mouth, listening benignantly and admiringly to those caricatures of his ways, and illustrations of his recent misbehaviours, from his beloved Jane's lips."[1]

"She used to chaff her husband," says Duffy, "in a way very pleasant for a third person to listen to. Once when I was engaged in controversy with him, she took my side, beginning, 'Now, if he puts his prophet's cloak on, I don't know what we may come to, but my opinion is . . .'"

The same excellent observer has mentioned a most characteristic trait. "Mrs. Carlyle used to sit in a room on the ground floor, and when I went to call I used to go in there first for a talk with her. She was a most brilliant talker, as unaffected and charming in her talk as in her letters, yet quite different from her husband, and particularly so in this, that *she* knew all the fashionable gossip, had got it always from the best sources, and talked it—*well.* Carlyle on the other hand would talk of anything *but* that, would talk of all sorts of things and persons, but never allude to the current gossip."

It is interesting to know, however, what may be stated on the best authority, that every day at dinner Mrs. Carlyle used to give her husband a full and particular account of all she had been doing, all she had seen, and all she had heard, gossip and everything else.

The only complaint their cooks ever made was that "fine cooking" was not appreciated. "Plain food, well cooked," was all he needed, they agree. "A little soup," said one, "quite hot, then meat and vegetables with one glass of port wine," was his usual dinner.

[1] D. M.'s "Carlyle Personally," p. 21.

It may be remembered that Mr. Froude, intent on proving that Carlyle was a stormy man and "ill to live with," explains how Carlyle could not let his brother John live in his house after his wife's death. "He would be penitent afterwards; he knew his brother's merits and his own faults. . . . But the impatiences and discontents were there."[1]

The truth of this was that Dr. John Carlyle was extremely restless, going into and out of the room, frequently changing his book or his newspaper, and so he was a continual though involuntary disturber of the peace in the quiet room where Carlyle sat and read. The consequence was that, as Carlyle wrote when they were considering whether Dr. Carlyle would live with him, "You and I have given one another considerable annoyance, and have never yet been able to do *together*."[2]

Those who have only "done worse than nothing under the name of reading" cannot realise the close attention with which Carlyle read. "He generally sat with his elbows on the table, his two hands at each side of his head—fingers often on the temples—to shade his eyes from the light of the two candles on the table. He sat reading steadily, without ever lifting his eyes or moving for a long time." It was so that an eye-witness described his method of reading at night.[3]

"Silence," says Sir C. G. Duffy with justice, "is the necessary condition of serious thought, and he was impatient of any disturbance which interrupted it. Unexpected intrusion breaks the thread of reflection, often past repair, and he was naturally averse to such intrusion. He had sacrificed what is called success in life in order to

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C." 1834-1881, vol. ii. p. 325. [2] Ibid., p. 326.

[3] Cp. also Mr. Tait's photo of "Carlyle at Work" in Mr. Blunt's "The Carlyles' Chelsea Home."

be free to think in solitude and silence; and this precious peace, the atmosphere in which his work prospered, he guarded rigorously."[1]

Under these circumstances it is not strange that his brother John was not suited to be a permanent inmate of his house. The fact is not in any way discreditable to either Carlyle or his brother, as Mr. Froude might easily have discovered if he had consulted Dr. John Carlyle on this or any other subject. Mr. Froude, however, seems to have steadily avoided the Doctor, not without reasons, which "it may be interesting *not* to state."

It was, indeed, a most unfortunate omission on the part of Mr. Froude that when conjecturing how Carlyle and his wife lived at home, he seems to have never questioned either Dr. Carlyle or any one of many others, who knew the truth of this matter by actual observation and not by hearsay. Thus what may be called the elementary facts of the case remained unknown to him. Mrs. Carlyle early learned to sit beside her husband without disturbing him. If not otherwise engaged, she always sat by him when he was "merely reading."

His work was generally done before 3 or 4 P.M. He took much exercise in the open air, but spent most of his evenings at home. In the early years of their married life they studied together in the evening. Her infirm health soon stopped such studies, but many years later, when they lived in London, Mr. Espinasse tells us she "occasionally read a novel aloud to him. I found her once thus occupied," he says, and adds: "As long as Macready, a great friend of the Carlyles, remained on the London stage, Carlyle went occasionally to the theatre," always, or nearly always accompanied by his wife. "When Carlyle was 'hipped,' his wife would sometimes drive about with him to concerts," where

[1] Duffy's "Conversations with C.," Part I. p. 48.

Chopin's music pleased him; or, at home, she "played and sang very expressively" the "Scotch ballads" he liked best.[1] She read the newspapers, which he seldom looked at. Almost the only exceptions to this rule were Duffy's *Nation*, and also the *Times* when a big war was in progress. Many newspapers were often *sent* to him gratis. Unless his wife chose to look at them, they were usually re-addressed *un*read to some friend who would be grateful for them. She used to tell him anything interesting she noticed in the daily papers.

Friends who called upon them in the evening usually found them together, unless she had gone to a dinner party. He very seldom dined out. When he did, it was generally after Mrs. Carlyle had coaxed him and settled everything a week in advance. "It was she who promised him," said their servant, meaning promised to others that he should go, "and when she promised him she always took him, though I have heard him say, 'No, I cannot go,' when the thing was first proposed."

Oftenest of all, Carlyle quietly sat in the dining-room and read; while she sat, usually at the same table, and read, or knitted, or sewed, or otherwise amused herself, sitting beside him. "You hear me breathing," was her smart retort once, when being disturbed he looked up, silently appealing.

[1] Espinasse's "Literary Recollections," pp. 225, 267.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MEANING OF MRS. CARLYLE'S COMPLAINTS

MRS. CARLYLE'S complaints in her letters do not imply that Carlyle was cruel to her,—only that he was sometimes irritable and ill at ease. Her letters cannot be understood without considering always the condition of her health, and the direction of her thoughts at the time she wrote, as well as making due allowance for her humorous and exaggerated style of writing. Her "Letters and Memorials" may be compared to the *Mémoires* of Wilhelmina, the favourite sister of Frederick the Great. In character and temperament there was much in common between the two ladies, and we might almost apply to Mrs. Carlyle's "Letters and Memorials" the words Carlyle used of the Princess Wilhelmina's *Mémoires*:—

"Of what flighty uncertain nature it is, the world partly knows. A human Book, however, not a pedant one: there is a most shrill female soul busy with intense earnestness here; looking, and teaching us to look. We find it a *veracious* Book, done with heart, and from eyesight and insight; of a veracity deeper than the superficial sort. It is full of mistakes indeed; and exaggerates dreadfully, in its shrill female way; but is above intending to deceive: deduct the due subtrahend, —say perhaps twenty-five per cent, or in extreme cases as high as seventy-five,—you will get some human image of credible actualities from Wilhelmina."

As an example of how Mrs. Carlyle's letters are liable to be misunderstood, it may be pointed out that her complaints of loneliness were due to nervous depression. She really was for a time in danger of insanity, and if she had not been treated by her husband with far more indulgence than either doctors or friends advised, she might easily have become insane.

What Mr. Froude calls the "domestic confusions" of 1846, including the letters to Mazzini, were chiefly due to the "ill-health" and "ill-spirits" of the lady at that time, as her husband intimated,[1] and partly to her hot temper, as any truthful biographer might feel inclined to add; but the best medical opinions seem to pronounce even the hot temper at that period merely pathological. Assuredly her husband so considered it then, though at all times her temper was readily heated. So was his, but he had great self-control and love for his wife, and seems to have never spoken harshly to her, least of all at that critical period.

The words Mr. Froude uses seem to imply that both Carlyle and his wife used "violent" language when she departed to go to Seaforth.[2] There is nothing to show that he did so. On the contrary, if one may judge from the letters that followed, Mrs. Carlyle must have used her tongue freely while her husband said nothing. Poor lady! She must often have shared the feelings of another Scotch woman who once reached a demosthenic climax, in her apostrophe to a silent man,—"Speak! speak! or I'll *burst!!*" There is much room for correction in the popular notions of what Mrs. Carlyle's grievances were.

No other person could "take liberties" with Carlyle. His wife gloried in doing so, and was most exacting.

[1] "Letters and Memorials," i. p. 370.

[2] Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," 1834–1881, i. p. 379.

What other woman would have thought herself aggrieved because, "when her husband was working," she had to dispense with his society "between breakfast and dinner," meaning a dinner about 4 P.M.?

Mr. Froude intimates that Mrs. Carlyle was reasonably irritated because her husband "made the mistake of trying to force her into a position which she detested"; and his readers must suppose that it was her jealousy and just "irritation" about Lady Ashburton which made her think of leaving Carlyle in 1846. But in 1844, before Mrs. Carlyle had any other than pleasant feelings towards Lady Ashburton, we find her writing to her husband thus:—

"I am always wondering since I came here how I can, even in my angriest mood, talk about leaving you for good and all; for to be sure, if I were to leave you to-day on that principle, I should need absolutely to go back to-morrow to see how you were taking it."

The fact was that her nervous debility and the physical consequences of the age she had reached made her at that time more than usually exacting, and in her husband's eyes fully excused both her jealousy and all her other "freaks of diseased fancy" as he called them. She was in truth scarcely responsible for all she said and did.[1]

Similarly for many years both before and after that period, indeed, one may say, at intervals for the last thirty-one years of her life, her almost chronic nervous debility made her occasionally talk and think of suicide; and, fearing her reason might give way altogether, she

[1] In the words of Sir James Crichton Browne, "she then passed through a mild but distinct and protracted attack of climacteric melancholia, and all her accusations against her husband were but expressions of morbid feeling."

did herself harm by reading about insanity.[1] Her husband's long-suffering patience was admirable, and his readiness to believe whatever his wife said was sometimes almost ridiculous. It may possibly have added to the difficulties of her doctors that he sometimes repeated to her what they said about her to him.[2]

It is impossible to understand Mrs. Carlyle's many references to suicide unless one knows what she herself lived to discover, late in her life. On 28th September 1864 she wrote to her husband:—

"Dr. Russell handed me the other night a medical book he was reading, open at the chapter on 'Neuralgia' that I might read, for my practical information, a list of 'counter-irritants.'

"I read a sentence or two more than was meant, ending with 'this lady was bent on self-destruction.' You may think it a strange comfort, but it was a sort of comfort to me to find that my dreadful wretchedness was a not uncommon feature of my disease, and not merely an expression of individual cowardice." [3]

Under these circumstances it would be unfair and cruel to blame Mrs. Carlyle for her thoughts of suicide, or for unreasonable complaints which were often mere symptoms of her disease. Dr. Blakiston was a doctor who, in Mrs. Carlyle's emphatic language, "saved her life" in 1864, "by taking her under his care at St. Leonards;" [4] and his name for her chief malady then was "hysterical mania." [5] It was by all accounts some form of nervous debility, and of it one must say, as Sir C. G. Duffy has well said of her husband's dyspepsia: "Critics are sometimes disposed to forget that it is as much a malady, and as little a moral blemish, as toothache or gout, and the sufferer a victim rather than an offender."

[1] "Letters and Memorials," ii. p. 27. [2] Ibid., iii. p. 259.
[3] Ibid., iii. p. 212. [4] Ibid., iii. p. 306. [5] Ibid., iii. p. 259.

Professor Tyndall, who knew Mrs. Carlyle far better than ever Mr. Froude did, has remarked about her and her husband: "They had had their differences—due probably more to her vivid and fanciful imaginings than to anything else. He, however, took the whole blame upon himself. It was loving and chivalrous, but I doubt whether it was entirely just."[1] It was certainly far from just; but surely it is no new thing that a man, plunged into grief by the death of a beloved wife, should be less than just to himself in thinking of any little "differences" they had ever had.

That he then blames himself unduly is no fault of hers, however. If any indignant moralist, eager to rise in his own esteem by damning his neighbours, should demand, which of these two famous spouses he is to blame, the answer must be—neither.

A friend of Mrs. Carlyle, indignant at Mr. Froude's libels, of which she was the innocent cause, has emphatically declared that it was she who was "difficult to live with";[2] and it has often been reported that Lord Tennyson once made a similar remark. The remark was true, in a sense. Many others might be quoted to the same effect; but, after all, what *is* the worth of the opinions of others? Mrs. Carlyle heeded them not, nor need we. To Carlyle himself she was occasionally difficult to live with, but she was infinitely delightful too.

They were still in love with each other, more so than ever, after forty years of married life together. That cannot be gainsaid; and that is a fact which tells us more than all the gossip of a myriad of Miss "Gooseberries."

Under such circumstances, the "differences" they had merely varied the monotony of existence. They did not "differ" much; less, *far* less, than Mr. Froude

[1] "New Fragments," p. 369.

[2] A. J. Symington's "Personal Reminiscences of Carlyle," p. 15.

alleges; and what though the lady *was* as a rule to blame? What matter though *he* was to blame? what matter who? When a man really loves a woman, he finds it easy to forgive her faults of temper, and *vice versa*.

Carlyle complained to nobody. He handsomely kept silence for two. There never was a wife more loved and cared for while she lived, or more lamented when she died. The ill-health of Mrs. Carlyle seemed to her husband sufficient excuse for her shortcomings, and when a husband is satisfied with his wife's behaviour to him no more need be said.[1]

[1] While these sheets are passing through the press, Sir James Crichton Browne has publicly spoken even more plainly than I ventured to do. The following sentences from the newspaper report of his speech at Edinburgh University (Nov. 1897) may be quoted, were it only to show that I have rather understated than overstated the case in favour of Carlyle. In short, I took a legal and Sir James a medical view of the same facts:—

"Mrs. Carlyle was hereditarily predisposed to nervous disease. Her mother died of an apoplectic brain seizure, and a maternal uncle was paralysed." She herself "grew up into a highly neurotic woman. . . . For several years, before the date at which I would fix the climax of her mental trouble, she had been *occasionally taking morphia, which is apt to induce depression and suspicion in those who indulge in it*, and besides . . . excessive tea-bibbing, she smoked cigarettes. . . . As early as 1841 Mrs. Carlyle complains of low spirits, due, as she then correctly surmised, to some sort of nervous ailment, and from that time onward she had periods of gloom . . .; but it was not until 1846, when she was forty-five years old, that her despondency assumed a morbid complexion." Then began what the physician calls "cerebral neurasthenia, which is so often accompanied by profound dejection and delusional beliefs." It "deepened and darkened until 1855, when that excruciating journal was begun." . . . "*The journal bears the unmistakable marks of cerebral disorder.*" . . . The mental malady was "emotional throughout," not intellectual, and "was almost completely dissipated in 1857, leaving behind it, however, shattered bodily health." . . . "Throughout, . . . Carlyle's attitude to his wife was singularly noble. Those slighter forms of mental alienation, such as I insist Mrs. Carlyle suffered from, are really much more trying to those who have to deal with them than downright madness."

CHAPTER XXXV

"JANE'S MISSIVE ON THE BUDGET"

THE "Budget of a Femme Incomprise," as Mr. Froude entitled it, or as Carlyle called it "Jane's Missive on the Budget," was Mrs. Carlyle's most humorous piece of writing. Carlyle found it lying on his table one night in February 1855, when he "returned out of the frosty garden from smoking." He read it with great laughter, and at once settled everything to his wife's "heart's content"; but he thought it "so clever" that he could not, as he noted on it, "find in my heart to burn it, as perhaps I ought to do." Why ought he to have burned it? Because the accusations against himself in it were humorous exaggerations, and the clever little bit of writing was liable to be misunderstood, if it fell under the eyes of fools. It has been misunderstood. It is necessary to mention that Mrs. Carlyle "cried in her bed half the night," *not* because she was worried about money matters, for she admits in her "Budget" that both she and her husband had "long taken to . . . habits of *unpinched* housekeeping," but because she was "in poor fluctuating health" about that time.[1] 1855, the date of the "Budget," was the year in which her "climacteric" nervous illness was at its worst.

In her "Missive on the Budget" she complained, *how* accurately we can never know, that her husband when addressed about money matters said on various occasions—"You pester my life out about money,"

[1] See "Letters and Memorials," ii. p. 249.

"My soul is sick with hearing about it," "You had better make the money you have serve," "At all rates, hang it, let me alone of it." He was very busy just then. Whatever he said, he did *not listen*. That was the grievance.

The injured woman began in female fashion to inflict on the impatient male creature details of the rising prices, but she was ignominiously but "quite good-naturedly," as she admits, cut short with—"Then you are coming to bankruptcy, are you? Not going to be able *to go on*, you think? Well, then, we must come to your assistance, poor *crittur*. You mustn't be made a bankrupt of." "At the third speaking," £15 was given her in addition to her usual allowance; but the way of giving it made matters worse. It was "flung to her," she said, *i.e.* her husband gave it to her without listening patiently to what she had to say on the subject. As every woman must feel, even £15 was poor consolation for the lack of a patient hearing. It might have pleased some women, but it apparently disgusted Mrs. Carlyle.

"Nursing her wrath to keep it warm," she tried the Income Tax, but was merely told—"No, you cannot pay the double Income Tax; clearly, I must pay that for you." Next she objected to her husband's extravagance in the use of coals, and was answered: "I will burn as many coals as I like; if you can't pay for them somebody must!" This was too much for her patience, and what she called a "money row" seems to have been the consequence. What *she* said was apparently too voluminous for record. What she alleged that the irrational and impatient male creature said was this: "Have you the slightest idea what amount of money will *satisfy you?* Are you wanting fifty pounds more; or forty, or thirty? Is there any conceivable sum of money that could put an end to your eternal botheration?"

Thereupon, determined to make him read if she could not make him listen, she set to work on her "Budget," a document which in small type occupies 7¾ pages of Mr. Froude's book.[1] In it she triumphantly proved what an absurd creature he was, and how far she excelled other wives, especially in readiness for silent self-sacrifice,—a delicious touch, half true, half humorous; while she showed that the increase in her expenditure was—a little less than the lowest of the three sums Carlyle had suggested. So when the peaceful and unsuspecting male "returned out of the frosty garden from smoking" one evening, he found lying on his table a long document which he *had* to read. He "knew how to bear" a "shrewing," even Mr. Froude admits. He laughed heartily at the wit of her "Missive" and gave her at once all she wanted, nay, twice as much as she had asked.

Carlyle was overwhelmed with hard work then, and Mrs. Carlyle, as her journal soon showed, was seeking for something to complain about. There may be some wives who pity her. There must be more who envy her, for, after all, not only did she get what she wanted and more, but her husband complied with a good grace, praised her wit, and said "Thy will be done" with as much meekness as any woman could wish.

"Was not the 'great laughter' with which Carlyle read her 'Budget' most unfeeling?" it has been asked. How any one could read it and ask such a question, it is difficult to understand. Yet the tearful Mrs. Ireland writes most dismally on the subject of this Budget, outdoing Mr. Froude in *her* "shrill female way," with more than the exaggeration and none of the wit of Wilhelmina or Mrs. Carlyle.

The "Budget" was an effort of humour, and Mrs.

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, ii. pp. 162–170.

Carlyle's most successful effort. Laughter was the applause she wanted. If, without writing a word, she had answered £30, or £40, or £50, when asked to name a sum, the matter would have been at an end. But she wished to punish her husband for not listening to her, and for speaking in an impatient manner; so she wrote a long "Budget," extending, on a rough calculation, to over forty pages of ordinary letter paper, turning him into ridicule and inflicting on him all the details he objected to hearing. Was that the action of a wife who was habitually bullied? Was it the action of a wife who was habitually overworked?

CHAPTER XXXVI

"GEY ILL TO LIVE WI'"

IF any certain conclusion can be drawn from all the authentic evidence about Carlyle it is this, that he was more gentle and considerate to his wife than to any other person, and that he was habitually kind to all those who were near and dear to him. He himself remarks of his father and uncles: "It was a kindred, warmly liked, I believe, by those *near* it; by those at a distance, viewed, at worst and lowest, as something dangerous to meddle with—something *not* to be meddled with." A similar remark might truly be made of himself.

No man in this century had a wider circle of devoted friends, and surely it is superfluous to say that it is love that wins love. Leigh Hunt's eloquent testimony is worth quoting: "I believe that what Mr. Carlyle loves better than his fault-finding, with all its eloquence, is the face of any human creature that looks suffering, and loving, and sincere; and I believe further," and this part of Leigh Hunt's testimony is fully corroborated also, "that if the fellow-creature were suffering only, and neither loving nor sincere, but had come to a pass of agony in this life, which put him at the mercies of some good man for some last help and consolation towards his grave, even at the risk of loss to repute, and a sure amount of pain and vexation, that man, if the groan reached him in its forlornness, would be Thomas Carlyle."[1]

[1] "Autobiography of Leigh Hunt," chap. xxiv. p. 381.

How Carlyle behaved to his friends and why they loved him, some sentences from Sir C. G. Duffy's book must suffice for the present to show. Carlyle's kindness to his friends was only a faint shadow of the tenderness he always showed his wife. Let us see how this domestic bully behaved under circumstances which rendered disguise impossible. Duffy remarks: "If you want to know a man, says the proverb, make a solitary journey with him. We travelled for six weeks on a stretch, nearly always tête-à-tête. If I be a man who has entitled himself to be believed, I ask those who have come to regard Carlyle as exacting and domineering among associates, to accept as the simple truth my testimony that during those weeks of close and constant intercourse, there was not one word or act of his to the young man who was his travelling companion unworthy of an indulgent father. Of arrogance or impatience not a shade. In debating the arrangements of the journey, and all the questions in which fellow-travellers have a joint interest, instead of exercising the authority to which his age and character entitled him, he gave and took with complaisance and good fellowship.

"I do not desire the reader to infer that the stories of a contrary character are absolutely unfounded; but they have been exaggerated out of reasonable relation to fact, and have caused him to be grievously misunderstood. He was a man of genuine good nature, with deep sympathy and tenderness for human suffering, and of manly patience under troubles. . . . He was easily disturbed, indeed, by petty troubles, *when they interfered with his life's work, never otherwise.* . . ."[1]

If it could be presumed that a man always *intended* whatever he did, Mr. Froude could only escape a conviction for falsifying documents by setting up a plea of

[1] Duffy's "Conversations with Carlyle," Part I. pp. 47, 48.

"temporary insanity." His "Thomas Carlyle" might be made the basis of a series of charges sufficient to exhaust the patience of any judge and jury in England. But when juries are satisfied, they often cut short the evidence, and readers may wish to hear no more. So this part of the argument may be concluded by a footnote, written by Professor Norton. It is in the "Letters of Thomas Carlyle," vol. i. pp. 44, 45. Carlyle in a letter to his brother Alexander mentioned his plan of living at Craigenputtock while Alexander took the farm, and, alluding to the man who was then tenant, Mrs. Carlyle added a postscript:—

"Meditate all this in the profoundest silence; if our scheme get wind before the time the man will be '*gey ill to deal wi*'."

Professor Norton notes: "'Thou's gey' (pretty, pronounced *gyei*) 'ill to deal wi'—Mother's allocution to me once, in some unreasonable moment of mine,' is Carlyle's note on this phrase (which, indeed, is an old-fashioned country formula), cited by his wife in a letter to his mother in December 1835 (letter printed as No. 11 in 'Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle'). The readers of Mr. Froude's 'Life of Carlyle' will remember that he harps upon this phrase, using it as a sort of refrain, but always with the significant change of the word 'deal' to 'live'—'gey ill to *live* wi'.' At least six times in the course of his narrative does he repeat it in this form."

The change of the word is indeed "significant," and characteristic of Mr. Froude. It completely alters the meaning of the phrase. How often it has been written and said, "Carlyle must have been ill to live with, for he confesses it and *his mother said it*." The simple truth is that though Mr. Froude says she said it,[1] and uses the

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795–1835, i. p. 347, &c. &c. &c.

phrase "as a sort of refrain," Carlyle's mother never used any language that could bear such a construction.

The phrase "gey ill to deal wi'" means difficult to make a bargain with, or it might be applied to a man whose decision could not be anticipated. In this sense it was occasionally true of Carlyle, as it must be of any original man, whether of genius or not. So it is not difficult to understand how, "in some unreasonable moment of his," his mother called him "gey ill to deal wi'."

"Gey ill to live wi'," on the other hand, is applicable to a man who is selfish and unreasonable at home, "difficult to live with," and, strange as the fact may seem to those whom Mr. Froude has misled, it does not appear that anybody ever found Carlyle such a man.

Let us hope that Mr. Froude's error, however important, was due to inadvertence. It would be difficult to be equally charitable to any other man. But, seeing that Mr. Froude was careless enough to twist Carlyle's own words about Mrs. Carlyle's health to suit another part of his story, it may be possible that in this instance too it was only through carelessness that he altered Carlyle's mother's words.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CARLYLE IN A PASSION

THERE were few friends whom Mrs. Carlyle loved more than Mme. Venturi (born, Ashurst). That lady's bright account of her first acquaintance with Mrs. Carlyle's husband is as graphic as any of her famous friend's letters.

The quotations made here are from her magazine article in the *Paternoster Review* of November 1890. Her opening paragraph shows her opinion of Mr. Froude and her object in writing :—

"The few words I have here to say of Mr. Carlyle, and—incidentally—of his wife, are words of personal reminiscence only. I shall make no attempt to correct the many various, dissimilar, but all distorted portraits, successively offered to the public by Mr. Froude, &c. The eager curiosity with which they were seized upon by the public when first placed before them has long given place to a sentiment of deep distrust, even in those unacquainted with the great original; the friends who really knew Mr. Carlyle turned from them at once with anger and disgust, and posterity will, I think, very willingly let die the *soi-disant* revelations which—if as false as Mr. Carlyle's true friends believe them to be—it were difficult to characterise too severely; while the reckless publication of them—if true—must be regarded as a treachery to be condemned by all right-thinking men and women."

Mme. Venturi therefore does not attempt to portray

Carlyle. To do that would be as difficult as to portray the sun itself. But her simple straightforward statements are very precious to all who value any real fact relating to the greatest of modern men. She cannot, more than any other, show us more than she saw. We have to look through her eyes; but her eyes were of the best, and her veracity above suspicion.

"I had known Mrs. Carlyle for several months," she wrote, "before I chanced to meet her husband, as it had become my habit to pass some pleasant mornings in her bright company during the hours when he was occupied in 'the silent apartment'—'of organ-grinders and the vendors of milk entirely defiant'—which had been contrived for him at the top of their house in Cheyne Row. One of my earliest interviews with him was singularly comic.

"I was sitting with Mrs. Carlyle in the drawing-room one day, when—owing, I think, to the error of a new servant insufficiently impressed with the inviolability of the 'silent apartment,'—an unfortunate German gentleman was shown up into that sanctuary, at a moment, as it afterwards appeared, when the Worker therein was even especially unable to endure interruption. Mrs. Carlyle, hearing the step of an intruder pass the drawing-room and ascend the stairs beyond, gazed at me with a face expressive of horror, and, running to the door, inquired anxiously of the servant whom she had shown into the presence.

"'Oh, it is all right,' said the unconscious sinner, 'for the gentleman had a letter of introduction'; a reply which increased her mistress' dismay. After a very few moments we heard the precipitate steps of the unfortunate German stumbling down the stairs in full retreat; we heard the house door closed with a loud bang, and we saw from the window the ill-starred intruder rushing

down Cheyne Row as if desirous of vanishing as rapidly as possible from a scene of disaster and defeat.

"Before we had time to compose ourselves, Mr. Carlyle entered the room like a living thunder-clap: he in no way acknowledged my humble presence; I do not think he looked at me; he certainly addressed himself neither to me nor to his wife, but apparently to the adverse Fates as, raising his eyes and his clenched hands to the ceiling, he passionately asked—what had he done that God Almighty should send a d——d German all the way from Weimar for no earthly or human purpose but to wrench off the handles of his cupboard-doors? The tragedy of manner, voice, and gesture, was worthy of Œdipus, and the unconscious comedy of the words, so ludicrously out of all proportion to the subject-matter, and to the fierce glare of his magnificent eyes, that I burst into a fit of most irreverent laughter, which I found it impossible to restrain even when he turned upon me with the look of a lion about to spring upon and rend his prey.

"A moment's pause followed, during which I continued to laugh, while Mrs. Carlyle looked ready to cry; he then inquired with much scorn, 'And pray, what does this little lady find to laugh at?' Making a desperate effort to control myself, I gasped out that it really did appear to me to be an exceedingly undignified interference with human affairs on the part of God Almighty, to despatch even the most insignificant citizen of Weimar all the way to London on so very paltry a mission as that of wrenching off the handles of anybody's cupboard door. The extreme absurdity of the incident itself then seemed to strike him as forcibly as it had struck me, and he laughed at his own share in it as cordially and as heartily as I had done; and to our earnest inquiry whether the unfortunate German was a

lunatic, answered that he 'believed the poor soul was at least as sane as himself.'

"It appeared that the luckless visitor had arrived at a moment when Mr. Carlyle was undergoing much mental *sturm und drang* over the intricacies of his subject, and it was clear to us, after listening to his calmer account of the matter, that he had received the poor man with icy coldness; had taken from him the introductory letter in silence, and, after reading it, had uttered no word of welcome or even of comment; had, in fact, simply looked at him and said: 'Well, sir, proceed!' The unfortunate *missionary* from Weimar rose in great embarrassment, saying that he feared he had called at an unfortunate moment, and offering to retire. Mr. Carlyle, who seemed, in relating the scene, to be perfectly unconscious of the cruelty (?) of his own part in it, had shown his approval of the proposal by rising from his seat. The 'silent apartment' was octagon in form, the doors of the cupboards were similar in size and shape to the entrance door, and when that door was shut, indistinguishable from it. The German, eager to escape, attempted to turn the handle of one of the cupboard doors. It was locked, and in his confusion he had, in very truth, wrenched the handle off. The same thing happened on his next attempt, and then Mr. Carlyle pointed out his only exit, saying . . .[1] 'That, sir, is the door.'" By that door the ill-timed visitor departed, and after Carlyle heard the street door shut, he came downstairs to relieve his feelings.

Truly, the visitor was unfortunate; but no one who knows what concentrated work is can blame Carlyle. The visitor was himself slightly to blame for supposing

[1] "Severely," says Mme. Venturi; but she could not *know* that. Carlyle was not egotistic, and not prone to dilate on his *manner* of saying such things. He doubtless merely repeated the words he had used.

he could "drop in" on Carlyle at any hour which suited himself; perhaps, also, for not ascertaining, when he did call, whether Carlyle was busy.

The servant likewise may have been in fault; but Mme. Venturi seems to imply clearly that she had not received from her mistress definite instructions not to usher in visitors to her master's room when he was working. Indeed, I have been told by an ex-servant of the family that Carlyle himself used to have to give her such instructions. It was quite of a piece with Mrs. Carlyle's somewhat unsystematic method of regulating her household that he needed to do so, and it is specially noteworthy that Mme. Venturi discovered Mrs. Carlyle to be in fault from what the lady herself said and did before Carlyle appeared. From Carlyle there was no word on *that* subject, and whenever he saw the absurd side of the provoking incident—"for us," continued Mme. Venturi, "the whole thing ended in laughter. And here I may add that never have I heard any laugh like Mr. Carlyle's! It was as genial, as hearty, and as guileless as the laugh of a child: loud, but musical withal, and it had the same sympathetic and inspiriting effect upon the hearer as that produced by military music. . . ."

"Among many reasons for the personal gratitude with which I cherish Mr. Carlyle's memory, none is sweeter to me than the remembrance of the friendly welcome he gave to my husband on his arrival in this country. They had many long walks together. . . ."

One of the last letters Mrs. Carlyle wrote to her husband was a minute and sympathetic account of the sudden death of M. Venturi. When, in a few weeks, Carlyle also was similarly bereaved, Mme. Venturi visited him, and thus describes how he received her, when *she* intruded:—

"Mr. Carlyle was in Scotland when his wife died. He returned immediately to London, and I went to see him at once. The servant told me she had orders to admit no visitors; but I well knew he would not refuse to see one as unhappy as himself. He was quite alone; he looked up as the door opened and seeing me, said very gently: 'Ah! is it you?' He rose and came forward with both hands stretched towards me, his wonderful eyes filled with tears as he put his arms round me, saying: 'Sister in sorrow! sister in sorrow.' We both wept silently for some minutes, then, looking very pitifully at me, he said: 'Poor thing, poor thing; your hair has grown grey. Well, well; my heart is as grey as it.'"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE MEANING OF CARLYLE'S REMORSE

TO show the biographer's difficulties in making his strange story plausible, it may be as well to examine some statements Carlyle himself made, and then see how Mr. Froude used them.

First let it be said that Carlyle, like Luther, was a man eager to see his mistakes and repent of and amend them. "A tender conscience," says D'Aubigné, "inclined Luther to regard the slightest fault as a great sin." This was true of Carlyle too, and in this both Luther and Carlyle were strangely unlike the average man. Hence it is that such men as they are not intelligible at the first glance. Mr. Froude and many others have misunderstood Carlyle's expressions of remorse, exactly as Luther said that "gross and carnal fellows" misunderstood St. Paul's allusion to his "thorn in the flesh."

Carlyle's remorse may be described as the "asses' bridge" for students of his character. Those who understand it are likely to find anything they ascertain for certain about him reasonably intelligible. Those who fail to understand it can never understand Carlyle. They are the most unfortunate of all who, like most of his biographers, do not understand it and think they do.

Carlyle was habitually on his guard against self-conceit, as one chief source of stupidity; and comparing his books with what might be, he sincerely thought

humbly of them. There is no cant in his depreciatory remarks about his own books. Similarly, he was apt to find fault with his own conduct, and depreciate himself. He was as unconscious of his own goodness as of his own greatness, and yet the one thing was not more visible to all who knew him well than the other. His behaviour to friends, and to enemies, if he can be said to have had any enemies, was perhaps the greatest of all his works. Assuredly, *no* book could be compared for a moment with the magnificent example he has left us of a heroic life.

There is to most of us something pathetic in Schiller's beautiful line—

> "Tell him that when he is a man, he must reverence the dreams of his youth."

The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of pleasure and poverty and riches dim our minds and harden our hearts as we grow old; and soon, too soon, the glories of the morning of life fade into the light of common day. We are apt to think it must be so with all men, and that enthusiasm is always a delusion. It is not so. It is the greatest of all delusions to suppose it is so. Blessed are the heroic pure in heart, who grow old in wisdom, but never grow hard or dull. Of such was Carlyle, and one of the greatest of all such. He "was not one of us," said a preacher once, with truth. He was *not* "one of us." He was one of the strong, good and gifted men whose presence is sometimes vouchsafed to us, as pillars of light to guide men on their true path through the deserts of life.

True to his early ideals, till increase of wisdom led him on to better ideals, to which also he was true, he passed from strength to strength. In the evening of his days, glancing back over the long series of extra-

ordinary works with which he had enriched the literature of the world, the pleasure he took in them was such as any honest, thorough worker takes in looking back at work done,—even such, nothing more. His private behaviour too seemed to him all a matter of course,—he dwelt in thought on his faults and studied how to do better in future. Nothing more completely demonstrates to intelligent observers the magnitude of this extraordinary man than his healthy unconsciousness of much merit in what he had done. Let those who find this a hard saying study his profound essay entitled "Characteristics." Suffice it here to say that the remorse, which to many seemed proof of his depravity, was in reality the crowning demonstration of the moral grandeur of Thomas Carlyle.

Let us look now at some of his expressions of remorse:—

"Sunday night," wrote Carlyle, annotating a letter from his wife to his sister, "January 5, 1865, went out to post office with my last leaf of 'Frederick' MS. Evening still vivid to me. I was not joyful of mood; sad rather, mournfully thankful, but indeed half killed, and utterly wearing out and sinking into stupefied collapse after my 'comatose' efforts to continue the long flight of thirteen years to *finis*. On her face, too, when I went out, there was a silent, faint, and pathetic smile, which I well felt at the moment, and better now! Often enough had it cut me to the heart to think what she was suffering by this book, in which she had no share, no interest, nor any word at all; and with what noble and perfect constancy of silence she bore it all. My own heroic little woman! For long months after this I sank and sank into ever new depths of stupefaction and dull misery of body and mind; nay, once or twice into momentary spurts of impatience even with

her, which now often burn me with vain remorse: Madame Elise, *e.g.*—I sulkily refused to alight at the shop there, though I saw and knew she gently wished it (and right well deserved it); Brompton Museum (which she took me to, always so glad to get me with her, and so seldom could). Oh, cruel, cruel! I have remembered Johnson and Uttoxeter, on thought of that Elise cruelty more than once; and if any clear energy ever returned to me, might some day imitate it."[1]

To explain the reference, a quotation is needful from Carlyle's Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson ("Miscellanies"):—

"Still more tragical is this other scene: 'Johnson mentioned that he could not in general accuse himself of having been an undutiful son. "Once, indeed," said he, "I was disobedient: I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. A few years ago I desired to atone for this fault."'—But by what method?—What method was now possible? Hear it; the words are again given as his own, though here evidently by a less capable reporter:

"'Madam, I beg your pardon for the abruptness of my departure in the morning, but I was compelled to it by conscience. Fifty years ago, Madam, on this day, I committed a breach of filial piety. My Father had been in the habit of attending Uttoxeter market, and opening a stall there for the sale of his Books. Confined by indisposition, he desired me, that day, to go and attend the stall in his place. My pride prevented me; I gave my father a refusal.—And now to-day I have been at Uttoxeter; I went into the market at the time of business, uncovered my head, and stood with it bare, for an hour, on the spot where my Father's stall

[1] "Letters and Memorials of J. W. C.," iii. pp. 242, 243.

used to stand. In contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory.'

"Who does not figure to himself this spectacle, amid the 'rainy weather, and the sneers,' or wonder, 'of the bystanders?' The memory of old Michael Johnson, rising from the far distance; sad-beckoning in the 'moonlight of memory': how he had toiled faithfully hither and thither; patiently among the lowest of the low; been buffeted and beaten down, yet ever risen again, ever tried it anew.—And oh, when the wearied old man, as Book-seller, or Hawker, or Tinker, or whatsoever it was that Fate had reduced him to, begged help of *thee* for one day,—how savage, diabolic, was that mean Vanity, which answered, No! He sleeps now; after life's fitful fever, he sleeps well: but thou, O Merciless, how now wilt thou still the sting of that remembrance?—The picture of Samuel Johnson standing bareheaded in the market there, is one of the grandest and saddest we can paint. Repentance! Repentance! he proclaims, as with passionate sobs: but only to the ear of Heaven, if Heaven will give him audience: the earthly ear and heart, that should have heard it, are now closed, unresponsive for ever."

Carlyle felt impelled to imitate Johnson, and did so in his own way. Mr. Froude reports:—

"When we passed the spot in our walks where she was last seen alive, he would bare his gray head in the wind and rain—his features wrung with unavailing sorrow."[1]

It was a pathetic action, which even to a Mr. Froude might surely have been intelligible, but Mr. Froude understood it not. Though he mentions it more than once, he makes no reference to the "Elise cruelty"—Carlyle's refusal to alight at Mme. Elise's shop, when

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795–1835, ii. p. 472.

he saw his wife wished it. Carefully omitting all reference to Carlyle's own explanation, the intelligent biographer seems to make an extraordinary inference from this simple and pathetic action. He seems to *infer* from it that "there broke upon him in his late years, like a flash of lightning from heaven, the terrible revelation that he had sacrificed his wife's health and happiness in his absorption in his work; that he had been oblivious of his most obvious obligations, and had been negligent, inconsiderate, and selfish. The fault was grave and the remorse agonising."[1] Again: "He recognised too late what she had felt and suffered under his childish irritabilities. His faults rose up in remorseless judgment. . . . For such faults an atonement was due, and to her no atonement could now be made. He remembered, however, Johnson's penance at Uttoxeter."[2]

Here we see Mr. Froude mixing up things. Carlyle did reproach himself for not having been more considerate in some other matters to his wife; but the imitation of Johnson at Uttoxeter was, as he expressly intimated, suggested by the "Elise cruelty." It was a specific act of repentance for what seemed to Carlyle's tender conscience a specific offence; but it has been magnified by Mr. Froude into proof of offences which there is *no* other evidence that Carlyle ever committed.

What then does his bitter repentance for the "Elise cruelty" fairly prove? First, note that it happened at a time when he was utterly exhausted by thirteen years' continuous and most laborious work. This fact, and the very words in which he described the "Elise cruelty," show that it was entirely *exceptional*, and the *worst* of the "momentary spurts of impatience even with her" which after her death "often burned" him "with vain

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795–1835, ii. p. 472.
[2] Ibid., 1834–1881, ii. p. 323.

remorse." What then was this terrible offence? A thing utterly trifling compared to what the public has been led by Mr. Froude to believe was the daily course of his life. Let any person of common sense candidly consider the indisputable facts. Carlyle was "burned with vain remorse" and in humble penitence "bared his head" "in rain or sunshine"[1] as often as he passed the spot where his wife was last seen alive, because he had been guilty of some "momentary spurts of impatience," of which the worst, quite the worst discoverable, and the one which led him to think of baring his head, was this, that when out driving with his wife one day, at a time when he was in a state of "stupefaction and dull misery of body and mind" through exhaustion, he noticed, though his wife apparently said nothing, that she wished him to alight at a certain dressmaker and milliner's shop, and he "sulkily" and silently refused.

An ordinary man in Carlyle's condition then would not have been likely to notice what his wife wanted, and if she had expressed her wishes, would probably have ignored them, and forgotten the whole matter before he turned the first corner.

This is the worst offence of which Carlyle was ever guilty towards his wife — at least it is quite the worst yet discovered. Women are likely to judge this matter better than men. Let them consider the facts, and weighing also his remorse and his humble penitence, consider—whether his wife was probably an injured woman? If that was the worst she had to endure, what was her ordinary life? The problem must be easy to any shrewd female intellect, though it was too hard for Mr. Froude.

There were other things, of course, although this was the worst. Let us look at some of the other matters

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, ii. p. 324.

in which Carlyle thought he might have been more considerate. For years he had urged his wife to get a brougham, and had even "been . . . stringent and immediate upon it," saying, "No wife in England deserves better to have a brougham from her husband, or is worthier to drive in it. Why won't you go and buy one at once?" He was very busy on 'Frederick' at that time, and made her at least use hired "flys," but at last,—"it was an inestimable mercy to me (as I often remark) that I did at last throw aside everything for a few days, and actually get her that poor brougham. Never was soul more grateful for so small a kindness; which seemed to illuminate, in some sort, all her remaining days for her. It was indeed useful, and necessary, as a means of health; but still more precious, I doubt not, as a mark of *my* regard for her,—ah me, she never knew fully, nor could I show her in my heavy-laden miserable life, how *much* I had, at all times, regarded, loved and admired her. No telling of her now;—'five minutes *more* of your dear company in this world; oh that I had you yet for but five minutes, to tell you *all!*' this is often my thought since April 21." [1]

In talking to Mr. Froude Carlyle seems to have used similar language, and with a strangely perverse ingenuity, almost tragically absurd, Mr. Froude used these words of piercing pathos, as—corroboration of the inference he drew from the imitation of Johnson at Uttoxeter! He puts these two bits of evidence together in a triumphant conclusive manner, as if he found in Carlyle's wish to see his wife "five minutes more" convincing proof that he had grossly ill-treated her! [2]

In another place Mr. Froude seems to find in this same

[1] "Letters and Memorials of J. W. C.," iii. p. 229, and "Reminiscences," i. p. 236.

[2] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834-1881, ii. p. 323.

wish proof that Mrs. Carlyle's jealousy of Lady Ashburton was not unreasonable, or at all events that Carlyle "was" somehow "to blame" in that matter.[1] After this let no man say that Sergeant Buzfuz overstepped the modesty of nature in the inferences he drew from poor Mr. Pickwick's indiscreet allusion to the warming pan.

Mr. Froude could not understand strong feelings,—that and not malicious falsehood is the explanation of his perversity. He could not in the least realise what any truly *sincere* man or woman can see at a glance—that Carlyle's remorse was not repentance for gross faults, but only such remorse as sorrow brings. It was the intense bitterness of his grief for his lost wife that made painful to Carlyle the recollection of every trifling matter in which he fancied he might have been more kind. He dwelt in thought on everything she had done for him, and reproached himself whenever he could in fancy see anything he might have done for her, but had left undone or had delayed to do.

This is the true explanation of many passages in the "Reminiscences," in reading which it must never be forgotten that we are reading what it was never intended the public should read,—we are overhearing the soliloquy of a heart-broken old man at the grave of his wife. His thoughts had returned to their early days in London, when he had been driven by stern necessity to lecture for a livelihood. "'Detestable mixture of Prophecy and Play-actorism,' as I sorrowfully defined it: nothing could well be hatefuller to me; but I was obliged. And she, oh she was my Angel, and unwearied helper and comforter in all that; how we drove together, poor two, to our place of execution; she with a little drop of brandy to give me at the very last,—and shone round me like a bright *aureola*, when all else was black and

[1] "Letters and Memorials," ii. pp. 256, 257.

chaos! God reward thee, Dear One; now when I cannot even own my debt. Oh why do we *delay* so much, till Death makes it impossible? And don't I continue it still with others? Fools, fools; we forget that it *has* to end; lo, this *has* ended, and it is such an astonishment to me; so sternly undeniable, yet as it were incredible!"

This does not mean that Carlyle never thanked her or noticed her attentions. It means only that when she had died he lovingly remembered them, and wished he had thanked her more.

"I knew him," wrote Sir Henry Taylor, on reading Carlyle's "Reminiscences," "for, I think, nearly fifty years, and what I know best is that he was not easily to be understood. One thing about him it is almost needless to say—that he was like nobody else. The world must judge men by its experience; and when the guidance of experience is wanting, the world is in a way to misjudge. It has had no experience whatever of men like Carlyle; and the circumstances under which most of these Reminiscences were written may have made *them* even more liable to be misunderstood than, under any ordinary conditions, Carlyle himself would be. . . . The reader as he reads, if he feels as I do, will feel himself to be overhearing a soliloquy."[1]

Sir Henry was of course thinking of the expressions of remorse when he wrote so, but he may have been thinking of another thing too. The harsh allusions to some persons in these volumes showed Carlyle "in a new light," greatly to the satisfaction of that large class of men who love to speak evil of their betters. In a new light, truly, he was there seen, but it was a light misleading to our eyes. "There was not," says Dr. Garnett with emphasis and truth, "another man of letters of his

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, June 1881.

standing whose life had been so honourably free from miserable feuds. No man had less resented attack, or estrangement yet more grievous. We have seen with what pleasure he cited Mill's name for praise after their alienation; we find his censure of Croker and William Taylor leavened with all the commendation he could see it just to bestow."

How then are his "Reminiscences" different from his other writings? That they were "soliloquies," as Sir Henry Taylor said, and not meant for publication as they stood, as Professor Norton proved, is only *part* of the explanation; for they differ as much from Carlyle's private confidential letters and talk as from his published writings.

There is another explanation, not easily expressed in words. "He wrote as in a dream," says Dr. Garnett, thoughtfully, struggling to find a phrase for the *rest* of the truth. It is not easy to explain in words what it was that differentiated the "Reminiscences" from all else Carlyle wrote, but they can best guess what it was, who have stood in thought by the new-made grave of a beloved one departed, who have seen all the bright qualities of the loved one now gone for ever, shining as in sun-splendour, strangely familiar and yet new, as if *now* seen for the first time; and who have felt the bitterness that cannot be expressed in words. How contemptible and insignificant all *others* seem, compared to the treasure that is lost; and those who in presence or even in memory seen as it were to obtrude themselves upon the soul in anguish,—how impatiently they are brushed aside!

Shakespeare could have understood Carlyle! Nay, many may yet understand him, but only a Shakespeare could have explained him. When old King Lear saw Cordelia dead, he was sane enough, but he was not

considerate to others. Ah, no! He could think of none but Cordelia, and turned away from all others with indifference:—

> "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!"

"King Lear's madness here returns again," say many sapient critics; and Carlyle's condition was very "singular," says Mr. Froude. So "singular" a condition showed he had much to repent of, is in brief Mr. Froude's argument, an argument that it is difficult to find patience to refute in detail,—an argument that tempts one to echo Dante's words and say—"Do not speak of Mr. Froude, just look at him and pass by!"

Such indeed, it might be said, is the purport of this book; but it is not altogether so. It would be wrong to view Mr. Froude with abhorrence, however horribly untrue and unwise may be his account of Carlyle. He failed to hold the mirror up to nature, not because he was worse than the average, but because he was not a great deal better.

In connection with this there is a circumstance which it is most difficult to mention at all, but which must be mentioned somehow. Mr. Justice Stephen wrote to Mr. Skelton, apropos of the death of Mrs. Froude: "It is a terrible blow for him, poor fellow, and I think I am the only person (except Mr. Carlyle) whom he has seen since it happened."

This shows that to Mr. Justice Stephen Mr. Froude's grief seemed, at least and worst, respectable and worthy of sympathy. To Carlyle also it seemed so, but Carlyle thought Mr. Froude far superior to most men, and was surprised by something which must now be told. He noticed and remarked confidentially to a very intimate

friend, speaking of Mrs. Froude's death, and of Mr. Froude's demeanour when he next met him: "Froude surprised me,—he seemed *so cold.*"

This cannot have meant that Mr. Froude did not express grief. He was never at a loss for words. It seems to mean merely that what he said of Erasmus was true of himself. He had "no passionate emotions of any kind." How could a man understand strong feelings of which he was himself incapable?

It is impossible that such an observer as Carlyle with such opportunities of observation could be mistaken; and the circumstance must have seemed to throw light on Mr. Froude's character, or he would never have mentioned it even in confidence. The remark he made seems to throw so much light on what may be called the foundation argument of Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," that it is now made public: "*Froude surprised me,—he seemed so cold.*"

CHAPTER XXXIX

MR. FROUDE'S FICTION ABOUT CARLYLE'S PENANCE

AS a rule it is in interpreting Carlyle's remorse that Mr. Froude has erred. On one matter of fact, however, there is an important correction to be made. In writing his last two volumes ("Thomas Carlyle," 1834–1881), Mr. Froude had to consider his own great reputation, and for his own sake he had to maintain more or less the false impression of Carlyle which, partly by his blunders, partly by his careless haste, he had given in the seven volumes already published ("Thomas Carlyle," 1795–1835, 2 vols.; "Reminiscences," 2 vols.; "Letters and Memorials of J. W. C.," 3 vols.). Thus "bad begins and worse remains behind"; for this circumstance introduced a new cause of error into his work, and led to the only misrepresentations that seem to have been deliberately insincere. The history of what happened is curious, but tedious. The most interesting part of it concerns Carlyle's motives in compiling his wife's "Letters and Memorials." In particular, it is interesting to know what he really thought of her jealousy of Lady Ashburton.

Once more, as in the Craigenputtock story, we have to choose whether to believe Mr. Froude or Thomas Carlyle.

In the "Letters and Memorials" (ii. pp. 254–257), Mr. Froude intimated that Mrs. Carlyle's misery at the date of her journal was mainly due to her jealousy, and that for her jealousy Carlyle "was to blame." Carlyle's

wish to see his wife five minutes more is triumphantly quoted as proof that Carlyle felt so himself.

On the other hand Carlyle himself, in discussing the causes of his wife's misery at the time of her journal, *made no allusion to her jealousy of Lady Ashburton*, mentioned his own "*engrossment*" in "*Friedrich*," &c., and remarked that he was absorbed in work "*far less* exclusively, very far *less*, than she supposed, poor soul!" He said with emphasis (the italics are his) that her misery was "owing *chiefly*, one may fancy, to the deeper down-break of her own poor health, which from this time, as I now see better, contrived its advance upon the *citadel*, or nervous system, and intrinsically grew worse and worse."[1]

There is no doubt whatever now that Carlyle was right as to the matter of fact. It is needless to discuss Mrs. Carlyle's health again; but it should be pointed out that even Miss Jewsbury mentioned Mrs. Carlyle's physical sufferings at that time.[2] See also, as an example of the other evidence, an article in the *Contemporary Review* for June 1881, by W. Knighton. Mr. Knighton describes in what condition he and his wife found Mrs. Carlyle on 20th March 1857. His notes were made at the time, and were even published before the "Letters and Memorials." His wife was a great friend of Mrs. Carlyle, he tells us, and it is clear that both he and his wife were favourites. He describes how, at the very time when she was writing her journal, Mrs. Carlyle was in miserable health, and in particular complained of want of sleep. "Cannot sleep," she said, "read till two, then doze sometimes, sometimes not till four, sometimes not at all."

[1] "Reminiscences," i. pp. 203, 204.

[2] "Letters and Memorials of J. W. C.," ii. p. 273. See also footnote, *ante*, p. 247.

Let us confine ourselves, however, to the important question what Carlyle's sentiments were. His own words just quoted surely leave no room for doubt on that subject, and cannot by any ingenuity be reconciled with Mr. Froude's story.

Mr. Venables, one of the most acute and accomplished lawyers then living, was the first to point out Mr. Froude's ingenious but absurd attempt to obscure the contrast between his story and Carlyle's. Criticising Mr. Froude's work in the *Fortnightly Review* for May 1883, Mr. Venables said in effect that Carlyle's expressions of remorse did *not* bear the interpretation Mr. Froude gave them. "He refers," said Venables, "with mournful pride and with entire absence of self-reproach to the relations which at one time excited her jealousy." Mr. Venables proceeded to indicate that Mr. Froude had exaggerated what jealousy there was, and, arguing very reasonably from the papers published, he ventured to "doubt whether Carlyle to the last understood the extent, or even the nature, of her jealous feeling."[1]

At a later date, Mr. Espinasse made a happy hit in the dark. "Indeed, it is very noticeable," said he, "that when editing his wife's letters for possible publication, Carlyle *omitted all those of them written when she left London for the North, a little later, in a very angry mood*, and that when expressing penitence, in the 'Reminiscences,' for his marital shortcomings, he forbore any mention of this Baring episode."[2] When Mr. Froude read these words, he must have trembled to reflect on what would be the result to his own reputation if ever the public knew that Mr. Espinasse had guessed the truth.

Long before Mr. Espinasse wrote his "Literary

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, May 1883, pp. 623, 625, &c.

[2] Espinasse's "Literary Recollections," p. 104. Italics mine.

Recollections," Mr. Froude had finished his last two volumes, and in them the strange effects of Mr. Venables' criticisms are visible. Mr. Froude twice mentioned Carlyle's great liking for Venables,[1] and then he enriched literature with the most daring romance that ever was set forth as a truthful narrative.

His strange story was to the effect that Carlyle lived from 1866 till his death in 1881 in agonies of remorse for his neglect of his unfortunate wife. We are asked to believe that Carlyle entrusted to Mr. Froude the task of exposing his frailties after he was gone. It was not as a common editor that Mr. Froude was entrusted with the "Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle." Ah, no! it was (so *he* says) as a kind of modern (*very* modern) father-confessor. Mr. Froude was overwhelmed with admiration of the man who had so just an opinion of James Anthony Froude, and the "Letters and Memorials"—intended as a sacrifice of Carlyle's own reputation—seemed to him sublime. "In his most heroic life," says Mr. Froude, "there was nothing more heroic, more characteristic of him, more indicative at once of his humility and his intense truthfulness. He regarded it (the 'Letters and Memorials') evidently as an expiation of his own conduct, all that he had now to offer, and something which removed the shadow between himself and her memory."[2] Thus it was that Carlyle decided to put himself in the pillory after death,—as if soliciting all passers-by to take warning from a poor old man, who had a miserable old age because he had ill-treated his wife.

The word "evidently" is noteworthy. In Mr. Froude's pages such a word almost invariably indicates an invention. Here its meaning seems to be that Carlyle

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834-1881, ii. pp. 128 and 271.

[2] Ibid., p. 410.

never said a word to the effect that he intended the "Letters and Memorials" as an expiation. The meaning of the word "evidently" is that Mr. Froude merely so supposed.

The action which to Mr. Froude appeared so heroic would have been creditable in himself, or in any man who constantly studied what was thought and said about him, *i.e.* in any one who was more or less a quack. Carlyle, however, was not such a man. Always intent on being what he should be, he thought not of how he appeared, and to put himself and the details of his domestic sins before the eyes of the public as a penance was what he would never have thought of doing. If by any possibility such a man as Carlyle could have thought of doing such a thing, he would have done it himself while he lived.

Many circumstances, conclusive when considered together, had proved to me that Mr. Froude's whole story was fallacious, before a circumstance came to my knowledge which alone rendered other proof needless and ended all doubt. We have seen, as accurately printed in Professor Norton's edition of the "Reminiscences," what Carlyle said of his wife's misery at the date of her journal. Another circumstance in harmony therewith has now to to be disclosed. When Carlyle gave Mr. Froude the fair copy of the MS. of the "Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle," he gave his niece Miss Aitken a bundle of letters *which were on no account to be given to Mr. Froude.* These were Mrs. Carlyle's letters about Lady Ashburton.

That Carlyle deliberately kept these letters from Mr. Froude shows that he wished to have nothing said about the subject, and that Mr. Froude's story about his anxiety to make "expiation" is as absurd as any fiction can be. This also justifies beyond all dispute the conclusion of

Mr. Venables that Carlyle himself saw nothing to repent of in that matter. Full proof that there was nothing for him to repent of must be reserved for a full account of his life. Meanwhile it may be gathered from the melancholy note which Mr. Froude prefixed to the extracts from Mrs. Carlyle's journal that Carlyle had marked for omission the passages relating to Mrs. Carlyle's jealousy. The whole matter was one chiefly of pathological interest, as Carlyle himself clearly intimated, and it was a cruel outrage to Mrs. Carlyle's memory to publish it. It must suffice at present to point out that the whole responsibility of publishing it rests on Mr. Froude.

It must not be supposed that Mr. Froude had any peculiar knowledge. So little was he in the confidence of Mrs. Carlyle that the perusal of her letters and journals five years after her death was a surprise to him. But many years before then Mrs. Carlyle herself discussed her journal with Professor Tyndall, "during an evening visit when I found her alone. She then told me," wrote he, "that some years previously she had kept a journal, in which, to relieve her mind, she wrote down her most secret thoughts and feelings. She condemned, as she spoke to me, this habit of introspection. . . . When I quitted her, I carried away the impression that her maturer judgment had caused her to regard these journal entries as the foolish utterances of a too sensitive past."[1] This pleasantly corroborates Carlyle's own account of the matter and is creditable to Mrs. Carlyle.

Then what did Carlyle mean by publishing her "Letters and Memorials"? it may be asked. He intended, as his "Reminiscences" clearly show,[2] to make for his wife a memorial such as he fancied she would

[1] Tyndall's "New Fragments," p. 370.

[2] Rem., vol. i. pp. 208, 209, 210, &c.

have liked, to keep her memory green. The same feeling that prompts us all to erect monuments to our loved ones lost prompted him to make for his wife a monument more enduring than stone.

The "Letters and Memorials" were not quite so successful as they might have been. Mr. Venables justly complained that there were too many letters instructing us how to pack eggs, &c. &c. "Repeated discoveries of obnoxious insects," remarked Venables, "minute accounts of illness and of medical remedies, might have been largely curtailed, or by preference omitted." The fault does not rest with Carlyle. Brevity was always a duty in his eyes. But to condense this work was to him exceptionally difficult, for everything concerning his wife was of interest to him. So he handed over the MS. to Mr. Froude, as at once a skilful magazine-editor and a friend of his wife, and he was naturally pleased to find that Mr. Froude had a high opinion of the literary value of the MS. There was no disclosure to be made. The disclosure was a result of Mr. Froude's inventive genius. It appears very probable that he never gave a hint to Carlyle of the sentimental rubbish he has written about disclosures and "expiation"!

Mr. Froude wished to "magnify his office." There is clear proof that he was chosen as editor expressly on the ground of his "practicality."[1] Carlyle felt that he was himself unable to form an impartial judgment as to the literary value of his wife's "Letters and Memorials." He found the work of condensing the MS. unusually difficult. Moreover his right hand had begun to fail him, and the MS. could not be suitably published while he lived. Indeed he did not intend it to be published till long after his death. For all these reasons some one

[1] See Carlyle's Will, printed in "Reminiscences," vol. i. Appendix, p. 270.

had to be appointed editor, and Mr. Froude was chosen. He was appointed joint-editor at first, along with Dr. Carlyle and Mr. Forster; and ultimately, when both these gentlemen died, he remained sole editor.

It is not difficult to understand also that, when Carlyle's suspicions of Mr. Froude's intentions had been aroused for a moment, "three months before his death," as Mr. Froude tells us, "he asked me very solemnly, and in a tone of the saddest anxiety, what I proposed to do about 'the Letters and Memorials.'" Mr. Froude tells us he was at that very moment engaged in taking that work to pieces, with the modest intention of incorporating it in one of his own. Apparently he did not venture to say so to Carlyle; but there is excellent reason to believe that Carlyle had received in a circuitous way a hint from a London publisher that Mr. Froude was going to play tricks upon him. This explains his "sad anxiety." "I promised him," wrote Mr. Froude, "that the Letters should appear with such reservations as might be indispensable." He did not say he proposed to amplify the extracts from the journal, and insert a note of his own and a letter from Miss Jewsbury to himself about Mrs. Carlyle's jealousy. So Carlyle "was entirely satisfied, and never spoke about it again."[1]

Mr. Froude did so far keep his word that the "Letters and Memorials" were published separately, however badly edited; but the whole story he tells about Carlyle wishing to expose his own failings, Mr. Froude struggling to hide them a little, &c. &c., is a tissue of absurdities. There was nothing to hide, except some weak fancies of a lady in delicate health,—unsuitable for discussion by the public. Carlyle never dreamed that Mr. Froude would disbelieve his word, or think it necessary to make any mention of such a matter. He wished to

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, ii. pp. 466, 467.

show his wife's "genius." He wished to make sure that the wit and wisdom of his wife would be preserved for the benefit of "the worthy that still remain among these roaring myriads of profane unworthy";[1] and he worked hard till he had prepared for that purpose such a monument to her memory as he felt she would have liked.

Some may call this a very commonplace theory of the famous "Letters and Memorials." "Merely a memorial like a tombstone? Were Carlyle's feelings *like* our own, only stronger?" It may well seem a commonplace theory. Happily it is not a theory, but a fact. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. It is also sometimes simpler. At all events, in a biography, it is always more satisfactory.

[1] "Reminiscences," i. p. 209.

CHAPTER XL

CARLYLE AFTER HIS BEREAVEMENT

BY way of contrast to Mr. Froude's story, though there is no room here for a full account of Carlyle's old age, a few more glimpses of the Thomas Carlyle of real life may be welcome. He was a unique historical personage, likely to be interesting to his fellow-men for centuries; and between him and Mr. Froude's hero there was little in common but the name.

When Carlyle returned from Scotland after his wife's death, he went at once to the room where the corpse lay, and closed the door behind him. A faithful servant who understood him well took care he was not disturbed, but left alone with his grief. "The heart knows its own bitterness."

When at last he issued forth, his face was as if older, but serene; he went down to the dining-room where some friends were. "When I saw Carlyle again," writes Duffy, "some weeks after her funeral, I found him composed, and at times even cheerful. His fresh mourning, a deep folding collar, and other puritanical abundance of snowy linen crowned with a head of silver grey, became him, and gave a stranger the impression of a noble and venerable old man. There is a photograph engraved with some of the memorials of him, which exhibits a man plunged in gloomy reverie, which did not resemble him even at that painful era, and is a caricature of the ordinary man. The photographer caught him doubtless

in some fit of dyspepsia, and obtained quite an exceptional result. Before his great trouble, and even afterwards, his manner was composed and cheerful, and in earlier times no one was readier to indulge in badinage and banter; a smile was much more familiar to his face than a frown or a cloud."[1]

But, it may be objected, Sir C. G. Duffy is a eupeptic good-humoured man, likely to paint in bright colours. Hear then Carlyle himself, discussing a photograph that, as the date shows, may possibly have been the same. Mr. Symington is the reporter of his talk:—

"Carlyle remarked—that he was certainly shaggy enough, in all conscience, without being made worse than he really was, but that this likeness made him look like an old rascally, ruffian, obfuscated goose!"[2]

Or let my readers look at Mr. Patrick's photo of Carlyle in 1874, or at Mrs. Allingham's charming pictures, showing the hero in his eighty-fourth year, pictures in which he himself found "a great deal of likeness."[3]

Sir C. G. Duffy's writings are well known, and also David Masson's. Let us take next Mr. Symington's account of an afternoon with Carlyle:—

"On Friday evening, August 13, 1869, I visited Chelsea alone. . . . On going in, I . . . found Carlyle reading Ruskin's 'Queen of the Air.' He strongly recommended me to get it, adding, that—leaving out his mode of accounting for the mythological parts relating to Pomona, Minerva, &c., and coming to actualities

[1] This and the other quotations in this chapter and Chapter xlii., from Sir C. G. Duffy's writings, are from the fourth part of his "Conversations with Carlyle."

[2] A. J. Symington's "Personal Reminiscences of Carlyle," p. 100. The other quotations of Mr. Symington's writings in this chapter are from the same excellent little book.

[3] Exhibited at the Chelsea House not long ago.

and the present state of things—it was all deeply and tragically true. He said it contained some of the very best and truest things. The passage on liberty and the house-fly Carlyle read aloud to me, marching about the room and declaiming it with great gusto, declaring that he thought it true to the very core, an illustration happy all through, and altogether one of the most wonderful bits of dramatic, natural, and powerful prose writing in the English language. Here it is:—

"'I believe we can nowhere find a better type of a perfectly free creature than in the common house-fly. Not free only, but brave; and irreverent to a degree which I think no human republican could by any philosophy exalt himself to. There is no courtesy in him; he does not care whether it is king or clown whom he teases; and in every step of his swift mechanical march, and in every pause of his resolute observation, there is one and the same expression of perfect egotism, perfect independence and self-confidence, and conviction of the world's having been made for flies. Strike at him with your hand, and to him the mechanical fact and external aspect of the matter is, what to you it would be if an acre of red clay, ten feet thick, tore itself up from the ground in one massive field, hovered over you in the air for a second, and then came crashing down with an aim. This is the external aspect of it; the inner aspect, to his fly's mind, is of a quite natural and unimportant occurrence—one of the momentary conditions of his active life. He steps out of the way of your hand, and alights on the back of it. You cannot terrify him, nor govern him, nor persuade him, nor convince him. He has his own positive opinion on all matters—not an unwise one, usually, for his own ends—and will ask no advice of yours. He has no work to do, no tyrannical instinct to obey. The earthworm has his digging; the

bee, her gathering and building; the spider, her cunning net-work; the ant, her treasury, and accounts. All these are comparatively slaves, or people of vulgar business. But your fly, free in the air, free in the chamber—a black incarnation of caprice—wandering, investigating, flitting, flirting, feasting at his will, with rich variety of choice in feast, from the heaped sweets in the grocer's window to those of the butcher's back-yard, and from the galled place on your cab-horse's back, to the brown spot on the road, from which, as the hoof disturbs him, he rises with angry republican buzz—what freedom is like his?'

"Carlyle added, that when Ruskin stuck to facts, and looked at things as they were known to men, or described scenes in Nature, he was great and had prodigious power. . . .

"After partaking of some refreshment, Carlyle asked me to take a walk with him, and we strolled up to the Park. . . .

"Carlyle . . . was dressed in a black shooting coat and vest, gray trousers, and wore a soft felt whitish-gray wide-awake hat, with a band of crape on it. He had, for neck-gear, a . . . black, old-fashioned stock, . . . a turned-down collar; and his beard white, grizzly, and protruding. . . ."

On the way to the Park, "he talked of the former country aspect of Chelsea, when he first came to it; but now it is so built in. He spoke of the impolicy of cutting down trees that take five hundred years to grow, as utilitarian folly and the work of Goths. He commended the German Government for educating wood-men and enacting that trees should be planted to replace those cut down.

"Then he talked of Iceland, and of the old Scandinavian mythology, of Thor, and Odin"—subjects of which his companion had made a special study. Mr.

Symington noted: "He is curious to see an old Icelandic Saga which I have in MS., and hopes to visit me, if at all in my neighbourhood."

From his conversation on this occasion about London house-building, a few paragraphs may be quoted, for the benefit of those gentlemen who have supposed he was not aware that the bad workmanship seen in London houses was partly the result of our ridiculous system of land-tenure.

"A seventy-seven or ninety-nine-years' lease seemed to satisfy people in London; but in Scotland, in his young days, folks liked to build on freehold ground, unrestrictedly their own.

"In illustration of this laudable trait, he narrated an amusing story of an old tailor who used to come to his parents' house, situated in Matthew Murray's Close, at Ecclefechan, in order to 'make down' his father's clothes into *quasi* new suits for his brothers and himself. The wages paid to the tailor were a shilling a day and his victuals. He well remembered his arriving in the morning, and fetching with him a round sod of turf, about as large as the top of a little table. This he placed on the floor, stuck a stick into it, with a slit split on the top, which held a candle like a vice, and there the tailor sat on the floor, from morning to night, barring meal-times, and worked away.

"This man, by dint of great industry and saving, had amassed a little money, and his special ambition was to become a laird, by purchasing the house in which he lived; but it so happened that the owner of the house, who had also made his money in the same slow, sure way, wanted to drive a hard bargain and obtain a good price for it. So negotiations went on for four years, more or less, between the two high contracting parties, as if it had been a treaty between two of the great European Powers.

"At length, the matter so far took shape that a meeting was held, at which each was represented by a lawyer and a draft deed was produced. On its being begun to be read aloud, 'I, John So-and-So'" (both the names escaped Mr. Symington's memory), "'hereby agree to let, lease, &c., for 999 years,' the tailor at once struck in with, 'What is that you say about letting and leasing? I tell you what it is, I'll ha'e naething adae wi' the transaction ava, unless I can buy the house *out and out to a' eternity*.'

"The one lawyer, seeing they had got a character to deal with, gave a knowing look to the other, who represented the tailor, and, anxious to expedite business, said, 'Well, now, suppose we add a 9 figure to it, and then see how it reads: 'I, John ——, hereby let, lease, &c., for 9999 years.'

"And, with great difficulty, after much persuasion, said Carlyle, they at length got him to entertain and accept of these amended terms."

There is room for only a few more extracts of his talk that day.

"Hearing a street organ, he remarked that, although the noise of that and such like disturbed and irritated him when at work, he had much sympathy with the poor lads who ground them. They were mostly a harmless, ill-used set, strangers here in a foreign land, bound to cruel masters, who gave them porridge in the morning and a flogging at night, if they didn't fetch back as much cash as satisfied the inhuman monster who lent the organ and sent them out. . . .

"While walking in Rotten Row, he told me how his brother John, who had been twenty years in Italy . . . had amassed an enormous amount of Dante material toward executing a prose translation. For long he had unsuccessfully urged his brother to set about it; but,

urge and progue as he would, he could not get him to begin. So he resolved on trying quite another plan, and bethought him of the man who was driving pigs to Killarney, and who told his friend to hush and speak low, for the pigs thought he wanted them to go the other way.

"This story he told with great animation, standing still the while and acting it inimitably, saying after he had finished: '*That* was how I got John to begin his translation, and thus it came about.'

"'One day, said I: 'John, man, if I were in your shoes, I would get quit of that Dante business, which hangs about your neck like a dead albatross. Cast it away from you and give up all thought of ever translating Dante. If you had been a young man, you might have looked forward to overtaking it; but now you are *too old*. Read, and enjoy yourself, and bother your head no more about Dante."

"'The steel struck fire,' said Carlyle, 'as was intended. John exclaimed: 'ME *too old!* I'm nothing of the kind!' And so, forthwith, he set to work, and produced one of the very best translations of Dante to be found anywhere.'"

That afternoon, after talking of the friend of his youth, Edward Irving, Carlyle "asked me to find out for him what medical man attended Irving in Glasgow, and to obtain for him some particulars about his last illness and death," a touching little service which Mr. Symington was prompt to render, receiving "a letter of thanks" in return.

He had seen Carlyle not long after Mrs. Carlyle's death, but "no allusion whatever was made to it on either side. I knew he could not trust himself to touch on it. . . ."

"His countenance wore at times, especially since his

wife's death, the quiet, subdued, melancholy look of a man who had not long to live, and knew it—looking the while wistfully forward to his release.

"The mood would change; and there appeared an infinite depth of tenderness and sweet humanity in him, blended with prodigious power, and dashed with irrepressible sallies of a quiet, grim, almost weird humour, *sui generis*.

"If he had fortunately succeeded in obtaining a fair quantum of sleep during the previous night, friends calling would find him gentle, kind, and communicative, taking an interest in everything human that came across him."

"Friends" would find him so; but what of casual visitors? Read in the *Saturday Review* for 30th November 1895 an account given by an utter stranger, who called without even a letter of introduction. It is equal to the best chapter in Boswell's "Life of Johnson." There are many similar little articles, and we may hope to see still more. Meanwhile take, as a summary of them all, the testimony of the chief of the Positivists, whose sectarian bias makes him hostile to Carlyle, but whose testimony is for that very reason all the more acceptable. "Scores and scores of men who knew him well," writes Mr. Frederic Harrison, "still walk the earth. They tell us of a generous, hearty, simple man of genius. . . . The present writer can remember him in extreme old age, quite a model of courteous and cheery repose, most ready to give, open of access, simple, fatherly, nay, patriarchal."

CHAPTER XLI

MR. ARNOLD AND THE BALHAM MYSTERY

MR. FROUDE'S misapprehension of the meaning of Mrs. Carlyle's humorous talk was the chief of the often-remarked "almost tragic" results of his deficient sense of humour. But there was another negative result which must be mentioned by the literary critic of Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle." Carlyle himself was a man of great humour, and in any word portrait of him, and above all in any account of his conversation, the total omission of this essential element renders a true likeness impossible. It cannot be said that Mr. Froude had no opportunities of noticing Carlyle's humour. He must have had many. It is no fault in him as a *man* that he "missed his chances"; but the fact that he did so was fatal to his success as Carlyle's biographer. The old painter's saying is as true of literature as of art; no man can put into a portrait more than he can himself see.

Once more an anecdote may serve to abbreviate the argument. One day in the seventies Mr. Froude took a young friend with him to visit Carlyle. It was a kind and good-natured thing to do,—it was a kindness similar to what he had himself received from Mr. Spedding more than twenty years before. As they arrived at Carlyle's house, they met Mr. Matthew Arnold departing from it, and spoke to him. He was slightly excited, and could speak of nothing but Carlyle. He was himself little over fifty years of age, then, and

he seemed to imply that Carlyle, between seventy and eighty years of age, was in his dotage. "Poor Carlyle! poor Carlyle! Poor old man!" said Mr. Arnold.

A few minutes later, Mr. Froude and his companion were in Carlyle's house, and listening to him as he spoke of his last visitor. "Poor Matthew Arnold!" said he, "Poor Matthew Arnold! He thinks that if *he* were to die, God Almighty could *never* make *another* Matthew Arnold."

Delicacy may have prevented Mr. Froude from making any allusion to this, but it really seems more likely that, as he saw nothing to laugh at, he soon forgot all about it. His companion could never forget it, and often spoke of it to intimate friends. If Mr. Froude *had* mentioned it, his method of doing so would probably have been like this:—"When I went to call on Carlyle, one day, along with a young friend who was most anxious to meet him, we happened to encounter Mr. Matthew Arnold leaving his house as we arrived. Mr. Arnold spoke with tender sympathy of the effects of age upon Carlyle, but, shortly afterwards, Carlyle speaking to us of him, indicated emphatically how conscious Mr. Arnold was of his unique superiority to other men."

Readers not familiar with Mr. Froude's writings may object to this hypothetic version of what he might have written. It is extremely difficult to ascertain precisely in any instance *both* what Carlyle said and what Mr. Froude reported; but happily there is evidence to suit every taste. Here is another characteristic anecdote, which shows how completely Mr. Froude failed to *see* Carlyle, and to understand even the daily casual talk of the great man he attended so assiduously.

Near the end of his biography (ii. p. 443), Mr. Froude writes: "I add here some few memorabilia,

taken either from notes hastily written down, or from my own recollection, which I believe in the main to be correct." Let one of these memorabilia be taken as a sample, to show how Mr. Froude unconsciously misrepresented a commonplace incident, even when he was able to be "correct" in details.

Of Carlyle he wrote: "He was extremely sensitive, and would become uneasy and even violent—often without explaining himself—for the most unexpected reasons. It will be remembered that he had once stayed at Malvern with Dr. Gully, and on the whole had liked Gully, or had at least been grateful to him. Many years after Dr. Gully's name had come before the world again, in connection with the Balham mystery, and Carlyle had been shocked and distressed about it. We had been out at Sydenham. He wished to be home at a particular hour. The time was short, and I told the coachman to go back quickly the nearest way. He became suddenly agitated, insisted that the man was going wrong, and at last peremptorily ordered him to take another road. I said that it would be a long round, and that we should be late, but to no purpose, and we gave him his way. By-and-by, when he grew cool, he said, 'We should have gone through Balham. I cannot bear to pass that house.'"

Mr. Alexander Carlyle is one of the most accurate of men, and he mentioned this matter in conversation. "I think it was about 1880," he said. "I was living with my wife in the Chelsea house then, and I remember Mr. Froude mentioning the incident to my wife and me, and saying that it showed how sensitive my uncle was. There had been much mention in the newspapers at one time of the 'Balham mystery,' and what Mr. Froude then reported my uncle as saying was, 'Let us avoid the Balham mystery.' Now both my wife and I had heard my uncle use that phrase about the road in

which Dr. Gully's house stood. He had driven down it once or twice, but rather disliked it, preferring the fresh air of Clapham Common, and 'Let us avoid the Balham mystery' was merely his humorous way of indicating his preference of the one road to the other.

"However, since Mr. Froude thought it so significant and important, we told my uncle in the evening what he had said to us, and my uncle at once burst into a hearty guffaw of laughter. When he ceased laughing he said, 'It was not that at all. It was the long lines of mean houses I wished to avoid, and to go round by Clapham Common.' He sat silent a while, then added, 'Poor Froude, he seems to be growing quite stupid.'

"Next time Mr. Froude called I heard my wife tell him what my uncle had said, all except the last few words. He said nothing, but when he wrote his book some years afterwards he had apparently forgotten what we told him."

From a private letter of Mr. Froude's to a friend in Scotland, it appears that when driving with Carlyle he got more fresh air than he liked. This suggests another explanation than he gives of his own preference for the shorter road through "the long lines of mean houses." Be that as it may, it is clear that he has told this anecdote wrongly; and precisely in this way he has succeeded in presenting a picture of Carlyle in old age when he saw him often face to face, which is as little a likeness and as much a melancholy caricature as his imaginary history of Carlyle's youth and manhood. In the words of Mr. Frederic Harrison, who criticises Mr. Froude's book with the literary license that often puzzles plain folks, "The old man's laugh, which in life was so cheery, comes up to us as out of a phonograph, harsh as the mockery of the devils that Dante heard in Malebolge."

CHAPTER XLII

"IN THE DOWNHILL OF LIFE," WHEN CARLYLE WAS DECLINING

IN 1878, *i.e.* about nine years after the walk with Mr. Symington, two nephews, Alexander and Thomas, sons of his favourite brother "Alick," came from Canada, chiefly to visit Carlyle and other relatives. On 10th August they proceeded to "The Park, Troqueer," near Dumfries, where Carlyle was staying with his niece. They spent much of the next ten days in his company, and a few extracts from "Tom's" diary may give us a glimpse of what they saw, and an echo of what they heard.

This new Thomas Carlyle rivals Boswell in his unconscious skill and veracity, and perhaps the most interesting thing about his diary is that it was written for his own reading and that of his family,—without any thought of its publication. I heard of its existence quite accidentally, on questioning him as to how he could recall with certainty after so many years his uncle's words. "I wrote them down," said he, and triumphantly produced the book.

10*th August* 1878.—"It was dark when we knocked at the door. Mary met us on our entrance, and soon after ushered us into the presence of Uncle Carlyle, who was resting on a sofa. He raised himself to a sitting posture, shook us kindly by the hand, and said, 'Oh, Tom, is this you? How are you? Sit down and let

me see you. How thick you are got Alick! How did you get so thick?'

"Brother Alick did not seem to have the proper or indeed any explanation of the cause quite handy; but suggested that he was older than when they last met.

"We sat down, and Carlyle looked at me for a while, and then said: 'Yes, I can recognise some features yet.' 'Were your mother and the rest well?'" was his next question, and after being satisfied on that topic,—"he then said, 'I was sorry to hear of your undertaking to visit Paris under such circumstances; strangers there could not get beds, I believe.'" Alexander explained that they had got "good beds" without difficulty, and "Tom" noted, with Boswellian naïveté: "Under a slight misunderstanding on my part, thinking he was vexed at our going to Paris at all, I answered, 'Our chief object in coming was to see our kindred in Britain, and we got tickets by way of Paris nearly as cheaply as to Dumfriesshire direct.' Carlyle: 'Oh yes.' . . . 'Did you see Gambetta? If your object was to meet with men you should have seen him. He is going to be their leading man there. What did you get by going there?' . . . I stated that we had not seen Gambetta, but that we had seen *some fine sights*, at which cousin Mary laughed and Carlyle smiled.

"He is tall and slightly stooped, and with a fresh colour in his cheeks yet, and much finer looking than the photographs of late would lead one to suppose. Is in his eighty-fourth year"—eighty-third to be exact—"mind quite clear and memory strikingly good still.

"He walks about a mile before breakfast, every morning between eight and nine." On the very next morning, the nephews were lucky enough to meet him when so walking, "quite alone, when coming towards the house. I offered him my arm, which he said he did not

need, but accepted, and talked with animation all the way back."

The abundant kindness with which Carlyle received his nephews it is superfluous to quote anything to prove. But his way of spending his time when rusticating in summer in his eighty-third year is an interesting matter.

According to this diary, he took breakfast after his morning walk; "then he reads a good part of the day,—in the open air when possible, . . . sitting in the shade of some trees near the house. . . ." He "has difficulty in finding new books worth reading, and was perusing his own 'Frederick the Great' during our visit. He has lunch at 2 P.M. Then he and his niece Mary take a carriage drive for a couple of hours. . . ."

Americans are "go-a-head" people, and this younger Thomas Carlyle was not the man to be readily alarmed by fast driving; yet, when out driving with Carlyle and his cousin Mary, he found the pace "alarming," and compared his uncle to Jehu, who "drove furiously." He added a characteristic little touch: "Alick was out with him in the carriage one day," and when "the driver was walking his horse up a rather steep part of the road, Carlyle exclaimed, 'Mercy, does he call *this* a *hill?*'

"On reaching home he smokes, then rests on the sofa or in bed for a short time. Then dines at 6 P.M.[1] After dinner he generally sleeps for a while, then reads and converses for some hours, eats a light supper before dismissing the servants, and retires to rest about 12 or 1 A.M. Has much difficulty in getting sleep. The slightest noise imaginable disturbs him. . . .

"Carlyle smokes a mild sort of tobacco, using . . . a very long pipe, called a churchwarden. Once during our visit we were all in the dining-room, and uncle was

[1] 4 P.M. dinner was the Chelsea hour in former years.

engaged in conversation when he noticed me holding my pipe unlit in my hand. He paused for a moment, and, looking at me, said, 'Are you not going to light your pipe?' He then resumed the thread of his narrative; but had not proceeded far when, seeing the pipe still unlit, he again paused and repeated the question. Of course I at once fired up, and the talk proceeded."

The "mild" tobacco is worth notice. Carlyle smoked in great moderation, "did not allow himself to exceed by a single 'draw' what he knew by experience would be helpful to him," says another friend.

Of his talk during the days when his nephew Thomas was there to listen for us, a little may be quoted now, and the rest reserved for a full account of his life.

They were driving, 11th August 1878: "We noticed some broom growing by the roadside, and my cousin (Mary) stopped the carriage, and got out to gather some of the seeds for me, to be sown in Canada. While she was so engaged, uncle repeated the lines of the old ballad, 'O the broom, the bonny bonny broom, the broom of the Cowden Knowes.'"

"Carlyle, speaking of one too lazy to work, said: 'In America you would call such a one a *loafer!*' He then quoted laughingly the lines from a recent American poem:[1]—

> 'Angels carried him home to his own,
> A darned sight better business than *loafing around the throne!*'

"Carlyle strongly dislikes 'him whom men call Dizzy.' He said, 'The Russians have shown a great deal of moderation and love of peace all through this dispute. Dizzy is one of the most popular men in

[1] By Colonel John Hay, now U.S. Ambassador in London. I quote from the diary, without Colonel Hay's book at hand to verify the quotation.

England at present, on account of his bringing about the Treaty of Berlin; but when the extra expenditure has to be raised by taxation, the people won't think so much of the arrangement, as, after all, it is no real settlement of the question.

"They praise Dizzy for bringing troops from India, as though it were an original idea on his part. But the same thing has been done before. When Sydney Smith was defending Acre from the French, Indian troops were under orders, and on the way to help him, but were not needed. . . .

"Speaking of the elder D'Israeli and some literary work of his, Carlyle remarked, 'And he did to some extent succeed in imparting a tinge of freshness to the old subjects he was writing about, somewhat in the same way as he might renovate *an old suit of clothes*.'

"I asked Carlyle's opinion of Gladstone, and he replied: 'Oh, he is a man who has a great deal to say for himself; talks a great deal about his principles; but his principles will change in any direction where self-interest leads him.'

"I said we had a notion in Canada that he (Gladstone) would have liked well to see the colonies cut adrift."

"*Carlyle*:—'The British people never wanted the colonies to be separated. . . .'

"On another occasion, when near the turning point in our walk, we came to a little girl sitting by the hedge. Carlyle stopped and asked her age, and if she went to school. He then gave her some pence, and remarked as we proceeded, 'That is a nice, modest little body, and answers one's questions at once. . . .'"

Carlyle inquired about the breeds of horses in Canada, and after some talk on that subject, "he made us laugh by telling of a boy who had to write an essay

on the horse, and produced the following: 'The horse is a very useful animal. He has four legs, *one at each corner*. . . .'"

"*Carlyle to me*:—'Have you read any of Franklin's works?'

"*I*:—'No, I never have.'

"*Carlyle*:—'His works are well worth reading.'

"*I*:—'Didn't he write some Almanack?'

"*Carlyle* (*with a smile*):—'Oh yes, Poor Richard's Almanack. There is a great deal of talk and boasting now-a-days about scientific inventions and discoveries, but the fact is that the present generation are not the originators of the most important ones. What a talk they made about the Electric Telegraph! But when Franklin succeeded in drawing a current of electricity with his kite from the thunder-cloud—*that* was to all intents and purposes the electric telegraph. . . .'"

Once when out driving, "I remarked that the Scotch people had, as I supposed, more of the Norse blood in their veins than the English. To this Carlyle replied, 'Oh yes. The only Norse blood in England is found in the northern parts.'

"*I*:—'The Highlanders are reckoned to be Celts and not of Norse lineage.'

"*Carlyle*:—'That is the universal opinion. But I have a notion, which grows stronger with me, that they *are* of Norse breed, though I have never found any one to agree with me there. Their *language* is the most obvious objection to this theory; but the early Christian teachers, who all came from Ireland, understood Celtic only, and in the course of time they may have taught the people their own language as well as religious belief.'[1]

"*I*:—'If they are of Celtic race, they don't resemble

[1] Note the curious coincidence between this opinion and Professor Huxley's views on language as a clue to race.

the other branches of that family. We have a great many in Canada, both from the Islands and the Mainland, and the most of them are tall, stout men, with massive heads and blue eyes, unlike the Celtic type.'

"*Carlyle*:—'Yes. If you land on any of the Hebrides or Orkney Islands, and call at any hut or cottage, a *tower of a man* will generally come out to meet you. . .'"

On the day of parting, "the cab for his usual drive was at the door. His niece Mary called to us—'Uncle is waiting.'

"We stepped out into the little hall," and "he said, 'I would like you to get a photograph of your father's grave and send it to me. I will bear all the expense.' We then shook hands. His parting words were: 'Goodbye; this is the last you will ever see of me. Try and lead manly good lives.'"

Thus Carlyle lived amid peaceful rural scenes, communing with friends and relatives, rereading his "Frederick." At other times he read Goethe, and the Bible, and Shakespeare, and other old favourites; and he was always pleased to find any new book that could teach him anything.

For the rest, since other work was no longer possible, he exerted himself to give more than ever to help-needing fellow-creatures all the help that he could give. His ready and intense sympathy with suffering was noteworthy all his life, and seemed to grow stronger if possible as he grew older. His quasi-pensioners were many, and money was the *least* that he gave. In Mr. Symington's words, "He would put himself to no end of trouble" to make his help "efficient." Many a time he made an effort to dictate kind letters for the benefit of others, long after all other kinds of composition had been abandoned.

Carlyle had passed his eighty-first year at the time of

the last letter he sent to Sir C. Duffy, who justly observes:—

"Like many recent ones, it was devoted to the general purpose of serving a young man whom he thought deserving, or, at any rate, in much need of help. When we find a man of eighty, who is done with the chief interests of life, employing his remaining strength to serve a struggling fellow-creature whom he has never seen and can never hope to see, we have safe data, I think, for determining the nature and disposition of this old man."

His occasional longing for death seemed unduly significant to Mr. Froude, perhaps because Froude was constitutionally timid, like his earliest hero, Edward Fowler. Such a man might well shudder, as he listened to Carlyle's expressions of a wish to be gone, but no brave man is likely to fail to understand him. As the old song says,—

> "And when I at last must throw off this frail covering,
> Which I've worn for threescore years and ten,
> On the brink of the grave I'll not seek to keep hov'ring,
> Nor my thread wish to spin o'er again."

"My final return to Europe," says Duffy, "took place in 1880. I arrived in London in the spring, and immediately visited Carlyle. It was deeply touching to see the Titan, who had never known languor or weakness, suffering from the dilapidations of old age. His right hand was nearly useless, and had to be supported by the left when he lifted it by a painful effort to his mouth. His talk was subdued in tone, but otherwise unaltered.

"'It takes a long time to die,' he said, with his old smile, and a gleam of humour in his eye. He was wrapped in a frieze dressing-gown, and for the first time wore a cap; but, though he was feeble, his face had

not lost its character of power or authority. He was well enough, he declared, except from the effects of decay, which were rarely beautiful to see. His chief trouble was to be so inordinately long in departing. It was sad to have survived early friends and the power of work."

Then he explained how he had found no satisfaction in the results of his attempts to compose and *dictate*, so that he had been compelled to recognise the fact that he must compose no more.

Speaking of his affliction to his nephews Thomas and Alexander, one evening during the visit described in the diary already quoted, Carlyle had said:—

"It is a misfortune for a man to live so long; I should have been at rest long ago. I am getting as it were into second childhood again. My hands shake so that when drinking a cup of tea I am as likely to throw it in my face as anywhere."

Much more evidence to the same effect might be given if needful; but it is *not* needful. There is not now the slightest room for doubt that Carlyle's longing for death was not at all due to brooding introspective habits, still less to remorse; but partly to the fact that his wife and many dear friends had gone before him, and chiefly and above all to the natural impatience of the fiery old man, utterly devoid of fear, mentally able and willing to work, kindling at the sight of stupidity and malfeasance like an old war-horse at the sound of the trumpet, yet *handcuffed*, so to speak, in compulsory idleness for many years by what doctors call *Paralysis agitans*,—the tremor in his right hand.

There is nothing more characteristic of him than that his last effort was to explain and denounce both "promoterism," the system of wholesale legal thieving which has gone to such lengths in England since his death, and

the mischievous tendencies of the Trades-Unions that aimed *only* at higher wages, tendencies scarcely suspected then by any one, though obvious now to all; but what he wrote on these subjects had to be left unfinished, for his hand failed him. He had to leave that work "for somebody that *has* still a *pen* and a *right hand*." The most strenuously industrious man of this century had to acquiesce in idleness, and fit himself to that condition as well as he could. Is it strange that he was sometimes impatient to be gone?

Along with his impatience of indolence, and equally plain almost to the casual observer, indubitable to all intelligent eyes, was his peace of soul; for his was the "peace that passeth understanding." It was quite a different thing from lethargy, or the complacent deluded self-satisfaction falsely called peace, and produced by periodic doses of *Mother Church's Soothing Syrup*. Carlyle needed no such imaginary consolations, even as a brave soldier does not need liquor to make his heart strong. Carlyle quietly *faced* death, without many words on the subject, not without hopes, of which more must yet be said, but quite without fears or misgivings. He faced death; not shutting his eyes to the dark background of human life, and often musing when alone on the dear ones gone before him "behind the veil"; but alive still, kind and considerate to all around him, though willing and sometimes impatient to die, since his work was finished. And when at last he gladly fell asleep, to all who knew him well the world seemed darkened, for all who knew him loved him.

How different from the tawdry semi-theatrical stuff written by Mr. Froude are these few sentences by Mr. Moncure Conway,[1] describing a little experience of his own near Ecclefechan on the day of Carlyle's funeral,—

[1] Mr. Conway's "Thomas Carlyle," p. 151.

simple words, straightforward and matter-of-fact, full of the pathos of reality:—

"In looking after the site of the old schoolhouse, I found at Hoddam an old man who had been a pupil there with Thomas. He was aged and shivering as he moved slowly amid the snow. He said, 'Tom always sent me something every year—until this last winter; then it stopped.'"

CHAPTER XLIII

VERDICT ON MR. FROUDE AND HIS "THOMAS CARLYLE"

WHEN talking once with Professor Norton, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, about Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," I ventured to say that I thought I could find in it as many errors as pages—about 1909. He smiled, and taking a volume of it from its place on the shelf handed me the volume. A glance at his pencil corrections showed that Professor Norton could undertake to prove far more than an average of one error per page. In some parts the average was about one error per sentence. In the small fragments already examined, readers have had glimpses of the infinite variety of Mr. Froude's errors. Professor Freeman is said to have distinguished them from other people's errors as "froudacities," but they are not at all peculiar. To err is human. Mr. Froude's errors are like other people's, and of not one but many species. Their only peculiarity is that they are relatively numerous in the works of Mr. Froude, compared with other writers of a similar class. Many a newspaper reporter and nearly every ready writer far surpasses Mr. Froude. Still, it must be confessed, his versatility is great. In his "Thomas Carlyle" there are errors careless, errors deliberate, errors stupid, errors sentimental, errors pragmatical. Every variety of error might be illustrated from that book of blunders.

In short, his book tells a story, invented by himself, to which he gives an air of authenticity by details mostly

inaccurate, by garbled quotations, descriptions, and pictures, much as Jonathan Swift gave an air of authenticity to "Gulliver's Travels" by Captain Gulliver's details of his family history and voyages, his descriptions of the countries visited, his minute accounts of what their inhabitants said and did, and his feelings when among them. Jonathan Swift was a man of genius; and so, though "Gulliver's Travels" was obviously intended for a romance, there was a sailor who swore "he knew Captain Gulliver very well, only he lived at Wapping, and not at Rotherhithe." But nobody ever felt that he knew Mr. Froude's "Thomas Carlyle," and all who knew well the Carlyle of real life say he is not to be seen in that book at all.

Contemplating the long array of Mr. Froude's blunders, ranging from mere errors of punctuation in the quotations up to erroneous reports of conversations, erroneous statements as to Carlyle's attitude towards science and religion, and a completely mythical account of Carlyle's relations with his wife, the impartial critic is reluctantly driven to use very strong language indeed, and to declare that in historical fidelity Mr. Froude's account of Carlyle's life is inferior even to Mr. Froude's other writings.

This circumstance has led many critics to argue that he was really disloyal to Carlyle's memory. For example, the judicious Dr. Garnett, discussing why he was so careless in editing the "Reminiscences," concludes, "Was it love of truth, or love of sensation? Avec cette sauce-là on mangerait son père."

Considering Mr. Froude's character and habits, however, there seems to be no sufficient reason to impute such motives in that matter. Mr. Froude apparently did just what was easiest; cut out a few sentences, to be able to *say* he had edited the book; and two more sentences to conceal what his instructions had been; then he left

some careless copyist and the printer's devil to make what they liked of the MSS. Whether he took any languid pleasure in the thought of the sensation he might thereby cause, is a thing not worth considering, a thing we cannot *know*.

> "Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
> Decidedly can try us."

The reason why Mr. Froude's "Erasmus," again, seems more successful as a portrait than his "Thomas Carlyle" is not difficult to guess. Erasmus was a smaller man, much more commonplace than Carlyle, and so more easily understood. Similarly, his "Earl of Beaconsfield" leaves us not quite ignorant of "him whom men called Dizzy," but his "Cæsar," "tells us nothing" of Cæsar. Mr. Froude was not a man of great genius, and so could not rightly sympathise with any character widely different from his own. He was not a reverent or an accurate man; so when he speaks of those above him, his words are naught.

There is another thing worth considering. Mr. Froude used his materials carelessly when writing of Erasmus, but his whole knowledge of Erasmus was derived from these materials, and he had to read them somehow before he wrote. His knowledge of Carlyle, on the contrary, was partly obtained from personal intercourse, but also largely from unsifted gossip, often at second hand. From one source or another, he had *formed* a theory of Carlyle's life *before the MS. materials reached him*, and he did not, apparently, think it needful to do more than glance over them, in search of tit-bits for quotation.

Professor Masson remarks gently that "*there are certain fixed suppositions of Mr. Froude's own in his narrative which could not have been derived from the letters and journals, and which a little research or*

inquiry would have dissipated."[1] These "fixed suppositions," as we have seen, continually lead Mr. Froude into such errors that he reminds one of what Carlyle laughingly said of Buckle: "Buckle had a theory of life one could see to which he required his facts to infallibly correspond—at their peril."

Besides Mr. Froude's lack of humour and the other causes of error already discussed, his ignorance of Scotch habits and ways of thought seriously misled him in shaping his theory. Among the old Romans, a man might not kiss his wife in public. Similarly, among the lowland Scotch and in certain parts of England there was and still is a great aversion to any *public* caressing or display of tenderness on ordinary occasions. This reserve might easily be mistaken for harshness by a sentimental gentleman, accustomed to the more effusive manners of the south. Thus it was that Mr. Froude misjudged Carlyle.

In the same way he misunderstood Mrs. Carlyle almost as cruelly as her husband. Absence of "gush" on her part was doubtless what led him to speak of *her* as "*stern*"-hearted. No one who knew her intimately ever thought so. She had of course to watch that her husband was not too liberal in charity, and in one instance, during their London life, roundly upbraided an acquaintance[2] who had obtained £50 from him, by "taking advantage of her absence"; but in most of his kind gifts she participated, and she was far, *very* far more generous than most women. To her as to him, it was more pleasant to give than to have or to receive. Tender kindness to others was her chief luxury. That whatever her faults she was *warm*-hearted is admitted by the severest critics who knew her well.

[1] "Carlyle Personally and in His Writings," p. 30.

[2] *Not* Mr. Froude.

As for her husband, how much he sacrificed his own comfort to hers cannot be proved until his life is re-written at length; but that he did so, habitually and as a matter of course, unostentatiously and often without a word being spoken, is the most pleasant of all the discoveries that reward the patient student of his life.

Again, among many minor matters, one other may be mentioned. Many educated Scotchmen and Scotchwomen detest Carlyle, chiefly because they judge him from Mr. Froude's account, as it is natural they should do until Mr. Froude is refuted and shown to be untrustworthy. But there probably is no man or woman educated in Scotland and familiar with Scotch traditions who can fail to recognise the absurdity of Mr. Froude's notion that between Thomas Carlyle and Miss Welsh there was a social gulf fixed.

It has never been generally noticed how full of antitheses is Mr. Froude's account of Carlyle. No better indication could be found of its inaccuracy. We know that Carlyle himself thought that this was not the way to describe any character truly. The biographer's problem always is to ascertain the true character of a man, and so be able to explain many things that, to a superficial observer, seem to be incongruities. Discover what we may, scrutinise how we may, there must always remain contradictions enough; but a love of contradictions because smart paragraphs can be manufactured out of them is a most dangerous pitfall to any man who tries to describe in writing the life of another.

Moreover, it has never been sufficiently considered by hostile critics of Mr. Froude that the sins he attributed to Thomas Carlyle seemed to him, a somewhat sentimental self-indulgent man, quite venial. He really invented them partly as foils to the grander qualities he recognised in Carlyle, not realising that they were quite

inconsistent with these qualities, and that the character he drew was altogether incoherent and incredible. The Yahoos of literature, secretly conscious of their own degradation, love to see their betters degraded; and so, through innumerable books, magazines, and newspapers, they have shouted "hallelujah!" and repeated and exaggerated the faults which had been mostly invented or too lightly taken for granted by this romantic writer. Let Mr. Froude have all the blame he deserves, but no more. He did not, for he could not, realise what a shock it was to those who believed in Carlyle's teaching to hear that Carlyle did not practise it himself. "I have set up a statue," said he, "and they look at nothing but the spots." He honestly did think that the faults he attributed to Carlyle were trifles, and many persons think so still. He may have been wrong, indeed there is no doubt that he was wrong in this; but even while demonstrating his general inaccuracy, it is only fair to him to make allowance for his point of view.

These and the other things already discussed seem to go far to explain why, in writing of Carlyle, Mr. Froude blundered worse than usual; but they are quite compatible with a certain honesty of intention, for which he must receive credit. The fact was that Mr. Froude lacked many things essential for a successful biographer of Carlyle. Above all, he lacked affection. "Love furthers knowledge." Love of Carlyle he had indeed some, but not much; and alas! he pretended more than he had. Perhaps the reaction from long continued half-hypocrisy helped him to enjoy mentioning the faults he supposed he had discovered in his master. And "thereby hangs a tale."

CHAPTER XLIV

MORE ANECDOTES OF THE WOULD-BE BOSWELL

IF one were writing in Mr. Froude's own manner, the use of the word half-hypocrisy would be allowable without any fact to justify it, and his admirers may readily suppose there is none. There is, however, a substantial foundation of facts, which can bear investigation. Here for example is an anecdote as true as it is racy, for indeed every detail has been strictly investigated, and the verbal statements are partly corroborated by the terms of Carlyle's will.

There hung in his drawing-room at Chelsea a portrait by Pesne of Wilhelmina, the favourite sister of Frederick the Great. Carlyle liked the portrait. He liked Wilhelmina, and the bright face on the canvas looked pleasant to him. Mr. Froude discovered that; and more than once, I have heard, when he had called on Carlyle and been shown into the drawing-room, Carlyle on entering the room found him intently gazing on that picture, and so lost in admiration that he hardly noticed Carlyle's entrance. He spoke of the picture with enthusiasm. So it happened that Carlyle, during the last days of his life, said to his niece: "When I am gone, Froude is to get that picture of Wilhelmina he admires so much. Do not wait for formalities. Let him have it at once." Mr. Froude was at the funeral in deep mourning. On returning to London he called at the house, and Mrs. Alexander

Carlyle told him what her uncle had said, and desired him to receive the picture at once. "That picture," said he, with a contemptuous glance at it, "I would not give twopence for it"; and he did not take it at all, but chose another, of greater market value.

Why then did Mr. Froude attend Carlyle so asssiduously, if his admiration was not wholly sincere? For various reasons, and in the end for this reason among others, that he saw a glorious opportunity for Boswellism, and he succeeded fairly well in acting the part of a Boswell, though he by no means succeeded in obtaining Carlyle's confidence as entirely as he has pretended. But to write a biography like Boswell's it was needful not merely to act the part, but to have the true feelings of a Boswell, and to be painstaking and accurate. As for accuracy, the habits of a lifetime had made that impossible to Mr. Froude; and as for the true feelings of a Boswell, these, like other feelings, are not quite procurable to order. He *had not* the true feelings of a Boswell. This is stated rather as a well-ascertained fact than as a matter of blame to him. Mr. Froude was little more to blame for not having such sentiments than for not having brown or golden hair. His fault lay in *pretending* to have sentiments which he had not. It is what some would call the irony of fate, and others the fit punishment of partially false pretence, that even his *half*-hypocrisy, though like a half lie most difficult to detect, has been detected.

There is really no room for doubt that while Mr. Froude pretended entire humble devotion, his true feelings towards Carlyle were like those of a clever, careless schoolboy towards a candid and wise tutor, a schoolboy whose real affection for the tutor he involuntarily respected and at least tried to obey was blended with partly unconscious resentment, because his vanity had been

mortified by censures, the very justice of which made them the more stinging.

Apparently he never stood up in his own defence, and never *faced* Carlyle. There was nothing Carlyle liked more than to find a man ready to face him, when the man was inspired by real conviction, not mere impudence. Mr. Froude, however, had no strong convictions he could care to mention, except such as he had learned from the sage, and in the end he doubtless was anxious to do or say nothing that might make him see less of him. Whatever the reason, it seems certain that he always submitted when in his presence, and even when the criticisms of his "Cæsar" made him "feel like the drenched hen in 'Frederick the Great,'" the most he ventured to do was timidly to beg Carlyle to read the book again. When Carlyle did so, and was more emphatic than ever, Mr. Froude ceased to call, till Carlyle's niece requested him to come again. This was apparently his nearest approach to a declaration of independence; and this too was like the action of a schoolboy, not of a man of about sixty-one years of age, as he then was. So much submission in a very vain man was sure to be followed by a reaction, and Mr. Froude indemnified himself by "speaking his mind" about Carlyle, when Carlyle was dead.

The feeling was there of course, though never expressed, while Carlyle lived. Mr. Froude was incapable of reverence for him or any other man. *His* reverence was a kind of schoolboy deference. An eye-witness, who apparently had none but kindly feelings towards him, gave me a comical description of an evening with the Carlyles. There were "several guests present, including Froude and his wife." Carlyle was in a "declaiming" mood, that night, and did most of the talking, the others "listening deferentially" and espe-

cially Mr. Froude. "*He* sat with a look of unflagging attention, as if continually conscious of the meritorious attention he was giving,"—like a good little boy at church.

Perhaps nothing is more characteristic of him than this anecdote, told by the widow and biographer of his friend, Canon Butler. She quotes a letter written by Canon Butler, when a guest at Mr. Froude's house, Onslow Gardens. The date is not given, but the context leads us to guess about 1875: "Froude is very well. He and I were playing lawn-tennis yesterday in the square, when old Carlyle came round to take him for a drive in an omnibus, which he does about three times a week. *Froude hid himself behind the bushes, and the old philosopher, unable to see him anywhere, retired, and we continued our game.* Afterwards" . . . I will quote no more. Let us leave Mr. Froude there for the present, playing tennis, and hiding behind the bushes from Thomas Carlyle.[1]

Of course Mr. Froude had some genuine feeling of affection for Carlyle,—he was only *half* a hypocrite. He loved him, but he was like the lover in the Scotch song—

"The laddie's dear sel' he lo'es dearest of a'."

It is very clear that he thought of himself first and his subject afterwards when writing his "Thomas Carlyle."

This fact alone makes the failure of his work more intelligible. He modestly quotes Carlyle's remarks on Lockhart's "Life of Scott" as applicable to his own work. Much more applicable are these sentences from "The Diamond Necklace":—

"'Of all blinds that shut up men's vision,' says one, 'the worst is Self.' How true! How doubly true, if Self, assuming her cunningest yet miserablest disguise,

[1] "Recollections of George Butler," pp. 263, 264. Italics mine.

come on us, in never-ceasing all-obscuring reflexes from the innumerable Selves of others; not as Pride, not even as real Hunger, but only as Vanity, and the shadow of an imaginary Hunger for Applause. . . . Alas now for our Historian. . . . Instead of looking fixedly at the *Thing* . . . he has now quite other matters to look to. . . . What did the Whigs say of it? What did the Tories? The Priests? The Freethinkers? Above all, What will my own listening circle say of *me* for what I say of it? And then his Respectability in general, as a literary gentleman; his not despicable talent for philosophy. Thus is our poor Historian's faculty directed mainly on two objects: the Writing and the Writer, both of which are quite extraneous; and the Thing written-of fares as we see."

It is needful perhaps to point out that, *judged by ordinary standards*, Mr. Froude was not guilty of any serious moral fault when he thus "stood in his own light," and by thinking of himself instead of his subject failed to see or make us see Thomas Carlyle as he truly was. It was a fault fatal to his success as the biographer of a unique and heroic man; but, like the other cause of error he himself alluded to in "Erasmus," and which also might be illustrated from many chapters of his "Thomas Carlyle," the tendency to attribute to great men the motives that influence ourselves, it is a common human failing.

We must never forget "Edward Fowler," Froude's earliest hero, with his "passion of timidity" and other estimable qualities, and his habit, whenever

> "To the sessions of sweet silent thought
> He summoned up remembrance of things past,"

of measuring himself against others always to the others' disadvantage. I have sometimes fancied that

Mr. Froude, conscious of shirking the labour of verifying the facts he glibly and gracefully described in his books, and chafing at the contrast between his own books and Carlyle's, used in his own mind to measure himself against Carlyle, and comfort himself by thinking: "It would have been better for Carlyle if he too had been a little lazier. He would have made Mrs. Carlyle much happier." A vain irreverent man always finds it irksome to admire, and is glad to think of anything that lessens his admiration or exalts his self-esteem. But we must not lay much stress on this, which is after all mere conjecture. It is more profitable to note how well Mr. Froude conquered his natural irreverence, and to emulate him in struggling against faults that cling to human nature.

Meanwhile, that Mr. Froude was in every sense a *failure of a Boswell* is not matter of conjecture at all. Be the explanation what it may, that fact is beyond dispute.

The statements he made as to how he was permitted to try to be Carlyle's Boswell require considerable discount. It would be too tedious to deal with them in detail. The most important fact ascertainable is that Carlyle looked upon the masses of correspondence (which he bade his niece lend Mr. Froude) as "*rubbish.*" That was his own word for them. In his prime, and indeed as long as he was still able to work, he used, in private talk with his wife *e.g.*, to call the time spent in writing letters "wasted." Nevertheless he had many relatives and friends to whom he was warmly attached, and for their pleasure he wrote often and at length. When in his old age heaps of letters written long ago were returned to him, he attached no value to them at all, and gave them to his niece to do what she liked with them. It was easy to persuade Carlyle to bid her

let Mr. Froude rummage through them. That Mr. Froude meant to tell the public whatever facts about his life it concerned the public to know, he was aware; but his natural reserve and modesty prevented him from suspecting on what a scale the would-be Boswell was about to write. The following authentic little anecdote illustrates their true relations, better perhaps than could be done by any argument.

About the end of 1879, when Carlyle's niece, then Mrs. Alexander Carlyle, was living at Cheyne Row, Mr. Froude requested her and her husband to oblige him by ascertaining exactly from their uncle how much money he had when he came to live at Chelsea first. They asked, and Carlyle said in surprise,—"God bless me, is Froude going into all *that?*" and added nothing more.

Incidentally this anecdote, together with the mistake about Mrs. Carlyle's health[1] and the blunders about the money Carlyle borrowed from Jeffrey and the letters Carlyle wrote to Jeffrey,[2] conclusively proves how carelessly Mr. Froude had read the MSS. of the "Reminiscences." The information he sought in this roundabout way is given there,[3] and the MSS. had then been several years in his possession; so that after all, whatever we may think about *how* Mr. Froude became biographer, there seems to be no room for difference of opinion as to *how* he wrote the biography. A *failure of a Boswell* must therefore be the verdict.

How complete a failure he was, chiefly through the inherent defects in his own character, another trifling but painfully characteristic anecdote may be told to illustrate. It shows also how Carlyle was annoyed on

[1] See Chapters xxii. and xxiii.

[2] Ante, pp. 220, and 217, 218.

[3] Norton's Edition, i. p. 107: quoted ante, p. 222.

his deathbed by Mr. Froude's lack of reticence,—the very fault which had rendered him somewhat unwilling to make Mr. Froude's acquaintance more than thirty years before.

During the last few weeks of Carlyle's life, a bed was placed for him in the drawing-room. He was then in the eighty-sixth year of his age. When the doctor said there was no hope, his niece, who was nursing him, told that to Mr. Froude as a secret. She was most anxious that her uncle should be disturbed as little as possible; but to her great distress a newspaper published a day or two afterwards the news she had told in confidence to Mr. Froude. She knew she could trust the doctor, and promptly taxed Mr. Froude with divulging the matter. "Oh," said he, "I just told K——" naming a gentleman still living, and then connected with periodical literature. "That was the very way to publish it," she responded, and assuredly what she had foreseen and wished to prevent immediately came to pass. There was a constant succession of callers. A woman had to be engaged to do nothing else but stand at the door and answer inquiries. And now we can understand, better than Mr. Froude himself, a part of his narrative which has puzzled many readers.

After mentioning how Carlyle's "bed had been moved into the drawing-room," and omitting to mention that the sounds from the street and the door were more audible there, Mr Froude proceeds:—

"He was wandering when I came to his side. He recognised me. 'I am very ill,' he said. 'Is it not strange that those people should have chosen the very oldest man in all Britain to make suffer in this way?'

"I answered, 'We do not exactly know why those people act as they do. They may have reasons that

we cannot guess at.' 'Yes,' he said, with a flash of the old intellect, 'it would be rash to say that they have no reasons.'"[1]

Mr. Froude's manner of quoting these words is very characteristic. Finding the meaning a little obscure, and not thinking of the annoyance caused to the aged invalid by the constant noises of many callers, he concluded there was no meaning, and tells us Carlyle "was wandering."

The same kind of mistake is repeatedly made throughout his work; and when he could not understand utterances of Carlyle on the highest topics, at a time when he could not suppose he "was wandering," he glibly tells us Carlyle "was inconsistent." In this again as in other respects, Mr. Froude once more, in a small way, reminds us of Voltaire, of whom Carlyle wrote:—

"The want of earnestness, of intense continuance, is fatal to him. He has the eye of a lynx; sees deeper, at the first glance, than any other man; but no second glance is given. Thus Truth, which to the philosopher, has from of old been said to live in a well, remains for the most part hidden from him; we may say for ever hidden, if we take the highest, and only philosophical species of Truth; for this does not reveal itself to any mortal, without quite another sort of meditation than Voltaire ever seems to have bestowed on it."

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834-1881, ii. pp. 468, 469.

CHAPTER XLV

PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION

THE most deplorable of all Mr. Froude's mistakes have reference to the very highest matters—philosophy, science, and religion.

Although he was "one of the best-read men in England," he was never of a philosophical turn of mind, and knew less perhaps of philosophy than of any other subject. Now, as has been recently remarked with justice, Carlyle "was an expert in German philosophy. . . . from" (or perhaps more accurately *at*) "the beginning of his long career" in literature, and since only an expert can rightly judge the work of an expert, it need surprise nobody to learn that on this subject Mr. Froude misunderstood Carlyle. To many readers, Carlyle's profound essay entitled "Characteristics" has long seemed to be the last word of all mental philosophy, German and other. Experts in philosophy are by no means of that opinion. They do seem to agree, however, on this subject in expressions of opinion which, if they will forgive the use of popular language, may be summed up thus:—

"Carlyle did not believe in miracles or any such nonsense. To talk seriously of the Gadarene swine, for example, would have seemed to him worthy of boys. But Carlyle was affirmative. He never dwelt on the negative. He was always anxious to emphasise what was worthy of earnest belief, without dwelling offensively on what was no longer so.

"Mr. Froude's chief mistake was that (sometimes, not always) he represented Carlyle as dwelling in an element of doubt. Nothing could be farther from the truth."[1]

Mr. Froude cannot be called ignorant of science. He was familiar with its results, but, unlike Carlyle, he had not received or given himself a thorough scientific training. This was another cause of error in his biography.

Still more hopeless was his position in the matter of religion. He was a mere doubter. He rallied from the moral debility into which he sank in youth, but to earnest conviction he never attained. To the last he was, as pious folks would have said, a self-seeker, a worshipper of self. He was, however, what men used to call a feminine soul, an intellectual and moral chameleon, taking his colour from his surroundings. While Carlyle lived, Mr. Froude clung to him, but it was because his society was what Huxley called Carlyle's teaching generally, a "great tonic." Mr. Froude "made him his pattern" in a nobler fashion than those who mimicked his style, but he never was able to share fully his convictions; and it is very interesting to observe how the disciple deteriorated after the teacher died. Nothing Mr. Froude wrote before that event seems to be quite so careless as much of what he wrote afterwards. He apparently desisted from the attempt to be accurate; nor was this the only respect in which a change was visible. His whole method of thought seems gradually to have altered. For instance, in 1867 he lectured on Luther and Erasmus, showing the importance of Erasmus, and yet indicating how unimportant Erasmus was compared to Luther. Erasmus "failed hopelessly — almost ab-

[1] The opinions of philosophical experts on this subject cannot as a rule be found in their books. In lecture and conversation, however, several of the leading experts in Britain, on various occasions during the last fourteen years, have expressed opinions here epitomised.

surdly. He believed, himself, that his work was spoilt by the Reformation; but, in fact, under no conditions could any more have come of it. . . . Erasmus really succeeded—so much of him as deserved to succeed—in Luther's victory."[1]

In 1894, when Mr. Froude again lectured and wrote on the subject, Erasmus was placed first, and that amiable and gifted but vain and timid man, with "no passionate emotions of any kind," was held up as the hero of the Reformation—the wise man in an Age of Unreason. The superstitious Luther was described as if he had been merely a disagreeable necessity. "Reason is no match for superstition. One passion can only be encountered by another passion, and bigotry by the enthusiasm of faith."[2] Mr. Froude's admiration of Erasmus was sincere, though the hero was rather questionable, and indeed Mr. Froude himself had a great deal in common with Erasmus, besides expensive habits. He was essentially a sceptic. It is only just to him to lay emphasis on this. This is the real reason why he has written quite wrongly, though without falsehood, about Carlyle's attitude towards science and religion.

For example, we find him writing thus in his account of "Carlyle's Life in London," vol. ii. p. 260:—

"I once said to him, not long before his death, that I could only believe in a God which *did* something. With a cry of pain, which I shall never forget, he said, 'He does nothing.' For himself, however, his faith stood firm. . . ."

If, as other indications lead us to guess, the words "not long before his death" here mean any time during the twenty days before his death, this painful interview took place in the drawing-room of the Chelsea house,

[1] "Short Studies," i. pp. 134, 135.

[2] "Life and Letters of Erasmus," pp. 212, 214, 431, &c. &c.

where Carlyle lay upon his deathbed. Carlyle suffered much pain then, and Mr. Froude teasing him in this way cuts rather a sorry figure. Moreover, the disciple quite clearly misunderstood the meaning of the exclamation which he could "never forget." It was such as Christ Himself might have uttered when "Peter answered and said unto Him, Declare unto us the parable. And He said, Are ye also even yet without understanding?"[1]

To Carlyle the Universe was all a miracle—God is everywhere, in us and around us, from Eternity to Eternity. Carlyle's belief was not a matter of superstition, still less was it the kind of belief which may be volunteered or refused at will. It was an earnest conviction, growing out of insight into the truth of things and governing his whole conduct. Gravitation was not more certain. Alone, or almost alone, among the able men of his generation, he lived in full view of this awful fact, and laboured "as ever in his great Taskmaster's eye" to do whatever God commanded him.

To teach and help his fellow-men who needed teaching and help was always to him a sacred duty, and Mr. Froude, more than most others, questioning him freely on the highest topics, had received free response. Yet the result of all his labours to explain the truth to Mr. Froude was little more than darkness visible. Truly, as Carlyle had written, "he that has a soul unasphyxied will never want a religion; he that has a soul asphyxied, reduced to a succedaneum for salt, will never find any religion, though you rose from the dead to preach him one."[2] The figure of Mr. Froude, with his dismal long face, standing in that little drawing-room by the bedside of the dying Thomas Carlyle, and saying to him, "I can only believe in a God which *does* something," there is a

[1] Matt. xv. 15, 16 (Revised Version).

[2] "Past and Present," Book iii. ch. xv.

figure not likely to be soon forgotten! "A God *which does something*," a God outside Nature and ourselves, who, if He would only wake up and do something, might anticipate the honour of finding a new worshipper in James Anthony Froude,—there is a modest, reasonable request. There is a travellers' tale that the negroes sometimes put an idol on its good behaviour, and, if satisfied that the wooden god has grown too lazy to answer prayers, the intelligent negro worshippers destroy the idol. Mr. Froude was in a similar state of mind. No wonder Carlyle uttered an exclamation of pain, and said with emphasis, "*He does nothing.*" Mr. Froude reports no more of that conversation. Presumably there was no more to report. Perhaps Carlyle abruptly turned away from him, for indeed "he never voluntarily introduced such subjects," admits Mr. Froude. This was true of him to the end. Idle talk on theology bored him or disgusted him.

It was characteristic of Mr. Froude to thrust upon him such topics when he lay on his deathbed, and characteristically polite of Carlyle to reply to him; but above all it was characteristic of Carlyle to reply with forcible brevity, followed by silence.

Mr. Froude was bewildered. Carlyle said of God, "He does nothing," and yet Carlyle's faith was visibly unshaken! Mr. Froude mournfully withdrew, I suppose, to meditate on these two things, and try ineffectually to reconcile them. He never succeeded. He should have written as J. S. Mill wrote:—

"I felt . . . that he (Carlyle) was a man of intuition, which I was not; and that as such, he not only saw many things long before me, which I could only, when they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but that it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me even after they were pointed out."

Mr. Froude, however, was a much less modest man than Mill. It seemed clear to him that two things he could not reconcile must be irreconcilable. Similarly, he records that Carlyle "was not always consistent in what he said of Christianity."[1] Carlyle indeed looked at Christianity from many points of view, and, unlike Mr. Froude, he did not suppose that professing Christians must necessarily be hypocrites or fools. But his views as to the truth and the fiction of Christianity have been clearly expressed in many parts of his writings, *e.g.* in "Sartor Resartus," "Latter-day Pamphlets (Jesuitism)," "Past and Present," "John Sterling," "Miscellanies (Shooting Niagara: and After?)," &c., and all his verbal utterances, when the needful allowance is made for fallible reporters, are in perfect harmony with what he wrote.

In the attempt to explain that deathbed exclamation of pain (the true meaning of which was hidden from him by his vanity), Mr. Froude wrote a four-page paragraph containing this sentence among others:—

"He (Carlyle) refused Darwin's transmutation of species as unproved; he fought against it, though I could see he dreaded that it might turn out true."[2]

The truth of this matter has been so well explained by Professor Tyndall that little need be done except to quote his words, unless perhaps we quote first what Huxley reported Carlyle as saying to himself one day he met him on the street. Huxley has told us how much he owed to Carlyle's teaching; but when in later life they met face to face, then the truth seems to be that Huxley's love of mere argument and lively readiness to go on demonstrating the absurdity of theological nightmares soon made him somewhat repellent to Carlyle. Apparently there never was any quarrel, but in short he *was* something of a bore. Their personal intercourse

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, ii. p. 455. [2] Ibid., p. 259.

had ceased for many years when Huxley one day saw Carlyle crossing a street in London, and went up to him and spoke to him. Carlyle did not recognise him at first, but when he had made out who it was, he at once said, as though he were continuing the last conversation of years ago, "You're Huxley, are you? You're the man that's trying to persuade us all that we're the children of apes; while *I* am saying that the great thing we've really got to do is to make ourselves as much unlike apes as possible." Or, as Carlyle said one afternoon to Mr. Symington, "waxing warm, and, at the same time bringing his hand down on the table with a thump like the sledge-hammer of Thor, . . . 'I have no patience whatever with these *Gorilla Damnifications of Humanity!*'"

It was to the agnosticism of the materialist, "seared with the brute idolatry of sense," that Carlyle objected. He did not "fight against" evolution. He understood evolution better than the scientific men themselves—to say nothing of the historians and the journalists. Some people who profess to have grasped the idea of evolution would speak more accurately if they said that that idea had grasped them. They fancy it explains everything. They fancy they have discovered what men always long for and wise men know can never be found—an "open sesame" to all the mysteries of the universe. Carlyle saw at a glance what scientific and other men are only now discovering, the *limits* of the theory underlying "that blessed word" evolution.

It was not the truth of it that he "fought against," but the idle assumption, which most men, including Mr. Froude, supposed to be a fair inference from the truth of it, that the sense of right and wrong, the love of justice and abhorrence of injustice, can be explained away by any pseudo-scientific shibboleth.

Then how explain the moral sense? some may ask. *There is no explanation.* It is in us, and we disregard it at our peril. To cease the idle habit of "accounting for the moral sense," and bend every thought to have more and more of it, to do what it bids and so see better and better our true path in this world, that was what Carlyle preached and practised. There is no other way to irradiate our souls and all our work with something of divineness. Like the infinite starry heaven above us, the sense of right and wrong within us is a great reality, which does not cease to be because *we* cannot explain it.

It is not by studying theology that a man can hope to learn the will of God, and thereby attain to strength and peace of heart. "He that still doubts," Carlyle noted in his Journal, "whether his sense of right and wrong is a revelation from the Most High, I would recommend him to keep silence, rather to do silently, with more and more of pious earnestness, what said sense *dictates* to him as right. Day by day in this manner will he do better, and also see more clearly where the sanction of his doing is, and whence derived. . . . The prize of heroic labour, suffering, and performance this, and not a feat of dialectics or of tongue argument. . . .

"The fast increasing flood of *Atheism* on me takes no hold—does not even wet the soles of my feet. I totally disbelieve it; despise as well as abhor it. . . . Nay, are there not perhaps temporary *necessities* for it, inestimable future uses in it? Patience! patience! and hope!" . . . "All people have *awoke* and are determined to have done with cants and idolatries." . . .

"All Christian religion . . . nodding towards speedy downfall, . . . in another fifty years . . . Atheism . . . will be the new religion to the whole tribe of hard-hearted and hard-headed men in this world, who, for their time, bear practical rule in the world's affairs. . . . Virtue, duty,

or utility an association of ideas, and the corollaries from all that. . . . What I had to note is this only: that nobody need *argue* with these people, or can with the least effect. Logic will never decide the matter, or will decide it—seem to decide it—their way."

Then they must be right, some readers may think, forgetting what is the function of logic. Logic is at best the art of arranging knowledge. It may be used to explain discoveries, but not to make them. What a man already knows, he can better understand by a rigorous use of logic. But what he does not know, he needs to learn by insight into the new truths. Even in material science this is so. Newton could explain gravitation by logic, but he had to discover it first by other methods; and it was a simple thing compared to moral truths. It was also akin to much that was already familiar, or it could not have been even *explained* by logic.

"He who traces," continued Carlyle, "nothing of God in his own soul, will never find God in the world of matter—mere circlings of *force* there, of iron regulation, of universal death and merciless indifferency. Nothing but a dead steam-engine there. It is in the soul of man, when reverence, love, intelligence, magnanimity have been developed there, that the *Highest* can disclose itself face to face in sun-splendour, independent of all cavils and jargonings."[1]

Nothing shows better how true all this is than the pathetic obtuseness of Mr. Froude—so willing to worship with Carlyle, yet so unable even to see what Carlyle worshipped. He was most willing to *argue* himself into Carlyle's belief, but the one thing needful was wanting. He lacked the moral courage to act as Carlyle acted, and do silently with pious earnestness what the sense of right

[1] Carlyle's Journal is quoted in Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, ii. p. 386, &c.

and wrong dictated to him. He tells us himself, in a tone of half-pathetic remorse, a significant little thing.

In 1866 Carlyle was intent on defending Governor Eyre, a colonial governor, who, by ministers seeking votes, had been degraded for the offence of too summarily suppressing a "nigger" mutiny. Writing to Miss Bromley about a meeting of the Eyre Committee, Carlyle incidentally remarked: "In short, contrary to all hope, I had to set my own shoulders to the wheel, and if it made any progress at all, which I hope it did, especially in that of trying for an infinitely *better* committee, the probable chief cause was that my old coat is not afraid of a little mud on the sleeve of it, as superfiner ones might be." Thereupon Mr. Froude, in one of his amiable bursts of candour, tells us: "I was myself one of the cowards. I pleaded that I did not understand the matter, that I was editor of *Fraser*, and should disturb the proprietors; mere paltry excuses to escape doing what I knew to be right."[1] This was quite in keeping with his character, as exhibited in his habitual methods of work.

Herein and nowhere else lies the secret of Mr. Froude's continued scepticism, even when on terms of friendship with Thomas Carlyle. Thus it was that he remained "amid the blaze of noon, unutterably dark." He listened eagerly to Carlyle's words, but it was as a blind man in a picture gallery might listen to the words of an artist. Is it strange that he misunderstood much of what he heard?

Here now are a few extracts from Professor Tyndall's reminiscences of Carlyle, to correct Mr. Froude's statements that Carlyle "fought against" Darwin's transmutation of species, but "*dreaded* that it might turn out true"!

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1834–1881, vol. ii. p. 329.

"Carlyle's appreciation of the relation of cause and effect was as sharp and clear as that of any physicist. . . ."

At Mentone, "in the afternoon we had a long drive on the Corniche Road. The zenithal firmament, as we returned, was a deep blue, the western sky a fiery crimson. Newton's suggestion — it could hardly be called a theory—as to the cause of the heavenly azure was mentioned. Carlyle had learned a good deal of natural philosophy from Leslie, of whom he preserved a grateful remembrance. From Leslie he had learnt Newton's view of the colour of the sky, and he now stood up for it. Leslie, he contended, was a high and trustworthy authority. 'An excellent man,' I admitted, 'in his own line, but not an authority on the point now under discussion.' Carlyle continued to press his point, while I continued to resist. He became silent, and remained so for some time.

"A 'dépendance' of the Villa Madonna had been placed at his sole disposal, and in it his fire was blazing pleasantly when we returned from our drive. I helped him to put on his dressing-gown. Throwing himself into a chair, and pointing to another at the opposite side of the fire, he said: 'I didn't mean to contradict you. Sit down there and tell me all about it.' I sat down, and he listened with perfect patience to a lengthy dissertation on the undulatory theory, the laws of interference, and the colours of thin plates. As in all similar cases, his questions showed wonderful penetration. The power which made his pictures so vivid and so true enabled him to seize physical imagery with ease and accuracy. Discussions ending in this way were not unfrequent between us, and, in matters of science, I was always able, in the long run, to make prejudice yield to reason." . . .

"I had various talks with him about Goethe's mistaken appreciation of the 'Farbenlehre' as the greatest of his works. To Carlyle this was a most pathetic fact. The poet thought he had reached the adamant of natural truth, and alas! he was mistaken." . . .

"The mistake, not unfrequently made, of supposing Carlyle's mind to be unscientific, may be further glanced at here. The scientific reader of his works must have noticed the surprising accuracy of the metaphors he derived from Science. Without sound knowledge such uniform exactitude would not have been possible. He laid the whole body of the sciences under contribution—Astronomy, from the nebular theory onwards; mathematics, physics, chemistry, geology, natural history—drawing illustrations from all of them. . . . Quite as clearly as the professed physicist he grasped the principle of Continuity, and saw the interdependence of 'parts' in the 'stupendous Whole.' To him the Universe was not a Mechanism, but an Organism. . . ." Then follows a quotation from "Heroes and Hero Worship," to show how Carlyle "saw early and utilised nobly the beauty and the truth of the metaphor" of the "Social Organism." It is followed by passages from the beginning of chap. xi. Book I. of "Sartor Resartus," with the parenthetic remark—"Joule and Mayer were scientifically unborn when these words were written,"—and the conclusion seems unquestionable. "Such passages—and they abound in his writings—might justify us in giving Carlyle the credit of poetically, but accurately, foreshadowing the doctrine of the Conservation of Energy." . . .

"It was not the absence of scientific power and precision, so much as the overwhelming importance which Carlyle ascribed to ethical considerations and influences, that determined his attitude towards natural science. The fear that moral strength might be dimi-

nished by Darwin's doctrine," or rather, by the crude materialistic talk of self-styled disciples of Darwin, "accounts for such hostility as he showed to the 'Origin of Species.' We had many calm and reasonable conversations on this and kindred subjects; and I could see that his real protest was against being hemmed in," or, more accurately, as might be abundantly proved by extracts from his private journal,[1] against the complacent insolence of stupid bestiality masquerading as science. . . . "Worship he defined as 'transcendent wonder'; and the lifting of the heart by worship was a safeguard against moral putrefaction. . . . There are freethinkers who imagine themselves able to sound with their penny twine-balls the ocean of immensity. With such Carlyle had little sympathy. He was a freethinker of wiser and nobler mould. The miracles of orthodoxy were to him as to his friend Emerson, 'Monsters.' To both of them 'the blowing clover and the falling rain' were the true miracles. Napoleon gazing at the stars and gravelling his *savants* with the question: 'Gentlemen, who made all that?' commended itself to their common sympathy. It was the illegitimate science which, in its claims, overstepped its warrant—professing to explain everything, and to sweep the universe clear of mystery—that was really repugnant to Carlyle.

"Here a personal recollection comes into view which, as it throws a pleasant light on the relations of Carlyle and Darwin, may be worth recording. Like many other noble ladies, Lady Derby was a warm friend of Carlyle; and once, during an entire summer, Keston Lodge was placed by Lord Derby at Carlyle's disposal. From the seat of our common friend, Sir John Lubbock, where we had been staying, the much-mourned William Spottiswoode and myself once walked over to the Lodge to see

[1] Mr. Froude's "T. C.," 1834-1881, ii. pp. 372, 373.

Carlyle. He was absent; but as we returned we met him and his niece, the present Mrs. Alexander Carlyle, driving home in a pony-carriage. I had often expressed to him the wish that he and Darwin might meet; for it could not be doubted that the nobly candid character of the great naturalist would make its due impression. The wish was fulfilled. He met us with the exclamation: 'Well, I have been to see Darwin.' He paused, and I expressed my delight. 'Yes,' he added, 'I have been to see him, and a more charming man I have never met in my life.'"[1]

[1] Tyndall's "New Fragments," pp. 365, 374-375, 385-388.

CHAPTER XLVI

CARLYLE'S CREED

THE transmutation of species was not the only scientific discovery that seemed to simple persons incompatible with religion. The discovery that the sun was probably made by the collision of huge masses of planets, asteroids, &c., seemed to many persons conclusive proof that they were at liberty to become Yahoos with impunity. "Where is the place for a Creator?" Where indeed?

"That of the sun," noted Carlyle in his Journal, "and his possibly being made in that manner, seemed to me a real triumph of science, indefinitely widening the horizon of our *theological* ideas withal, and awakened a good many thoughts in me when I first heard of it, and gradually perceived that there was actual scientific basis for it—I suppose the finest stroke that 'science,' poor creature, has or may have succeeded in making during my time—welcome to me if it be a truth—honourably welcome! But what has it to do with the existence of the Eternal Unnameable? Fools! fools! It widens the horizon of my imagination, fills me with deeper and deeper wonder and devout awe.

"No prayer, I find, can be more appropriate still to express one's feelings, ideas, and wishes in the highest direction than that universal one of Pope:—

'Father of all! in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!

Thou great First Cause, least *understood*,
Who all my sense confined
To know but this, that Thou art good,
And that myself am blind.'

"Not a word of that requires change for me at this time, if words are to be used at all. The first devout or nobly thinking soul that found himself in this unfathomable universe—I still fancy with a strange sympathy the first insight his awe-struck meditation gave him in this matter. 'The Author of all this is not omnipotent only, but infinite in wisdom, in rectitude, in all noble qualities. The name of him is God (the good).' How else is the matter construable to this hour? All that is good, generous, wise, *right*—whatever I deliberately and for ever love in others and myself, who or what could by any possibility have given it to me but One who first *had* it to give! This is not logic. This is axiom. Logic to-and-fro beats against this, like idle wind on an adamantine rock. The antique first-thinker naturally gave a human personality and type to this supreme object, yet admitted too that in the deepest depths of his anthropomorphism, it remained 'inconceivable,' 'past finding out.' Let us cease to *attempt* shaping it, but at no moment forget that it veritably *is*—in this day as in the first of the days."

But this leaves untouched "the origin of evil," it has been objected, to which the reply, written at large throughout Carlyle's works, can be only indicated here.

Part of the reply is that we can never hope to understand all the Universe, as the gentlemen anxious concerning the origin of evil too often hope to do.

Again, coarse and stupid mortals that we are, we too often measure happiness by cash, "position," &c., and base our self-respect on our possessions. No wonder that we think the "Creator" *pays* amiss.

Further, our notions as to what is wrong are often

as erroneous as our notions of evil. The Spirit of the Universe did not take even Moses fully into his confidence, much less the speculative theological gentlemen who concoct creeds and catechisms. Strange as it may seem, intelligent recognition of the facts around us is really more needful than a complete knowledge of theology, if one would solve rightly the daily problem of what one ought to do. That cannot always be determined by use and wont, however respectable, still less by rule of thumb. Head and heart must co-operate. We must with humble candour try to see not what flatters our vanity or fits our prejudices and fashionable creeds or negations of creeds; but what the real truth of the matter is and what it behoves us to do, or in other words, what the Will of the Almighty regarding us and our circumstances may truly be,—a thing not always discoverable at the first glance, but ultimately discoverable by any faithful soul who really tries to see.

Finally, and this is the most important part of the explanation, so far as explanation is possible, no man can stand isolated, however much he may wish it. Human society is always organic, a complex whole. Thus it is that individuals often shift to other shoulders the consequences of their own wrong-doing, and one suffers for the fault of another. Thus arises the old problem that perplexed Job. The wicked are powerful. Money-changers and promoter-sharks become princes in the days now passing, while our prophets and heaven-sent leaders are jostled in the crowd.

For the gifted no *pity* is needed. The legend of Calvary was not *wholly* a fiction. Our gifted ones must suffer for us, now as then. To them, if they are faithful, neglect and poverty may be helpful, as Carlyle found. Many such have suffered far more than he. "To think is hard," said Goethe. The agony of gifted souls is

the necessary accompaniment of their work, and neglect and poverty are trifles in comparison. It is an old story; and if the gentlemen who debate the origin of evil have any ready-made explanation of *that* mystery, their explanation must surely give great satisfaction to as many as can believe it.

The sufferings of the gifted must remain a mystery, it may be feared; but the sufferings of the mobs of all classes who jostle them need puzzle none. *They* suffer no more than they deserve. Old as human history, nay long before human history was written, the great truth dawned on the minds of men that justice too was one of the laws of this Universe, as indubitable as any other, and that the Universe was alive around them, and had many laws which men had to discern and obey before they could hope for well-being. Then wisdom was seen to be the one thing needful, and many other truths now dim were obvious. Pitted against the elements and the brute powers of nature and of man,—the cruellest of the brutes, when he *is* a brute—men see at a glance many things that may be hidden from Piccadilly fribbles, imps of the gutter, and smug and easy citizens, whose liveliest image of hell is an indigestion.

And so among civilised communities (for this story is as old as civilisation) the eternal laws that are the indispensable conditions of human prosperity are no longer studied, are ignored and forgotten, with results which are also as old as civilisation itself. Empire after empire, people after people have followed this course, and gone down into chaos. Are we of Western Europe to do so or not? That is the life-and-death question in front of us, demanding the eager attention of every class.

At present popular opinion is divided between the worship of extinct Hebrew gods, with "doxies" as useless as railway time-tables of twenty years ago, and

the notion that the world is merely a kind of *machine*, without any laws except such stockbroker regulations as men find it agreeable to make. Society, too, it is widely believed, can all be renovated by improvements in social machinery! No irony could invent anything more absurd than the wild rubbish sometimes spoken, written, and printed nowadays, in all seriousness.

The great majority of modern men seem fully convinced that any average man can know how a nation ought to be governed, or at least can choose offhand a *palaver-provider* who is able to expound it all! It seems so very easy to run such a machine, easier than a penny steamer they seem to think, for the engineers and pilots of our ship of state are evidently not expected to need a preliminary training. It is enough if they have learned the gentle art of providing palaver. And then we wonder at the results of such guidance, and clamour against Providence! Or worse still, finding that to be a waste of energy, we forget all about Providence, and in blind rage clamour against each other and drift towards chaos, race set against race, class against class, man against man, an "anarchy of spirits." Is it the beginning of the end, or the darkest hour before the dawning of a new and better day?

That among us there arose a man inspired as truly as ever man was, a man of wisdom and integrity, a great genius who was *not* to be seduced, but walked straight on his noble path, and laboured all his life to show us the truths we had forgotten, and to show us the meaning of the complex phenomena around us, this circumstance is the best hope of Western Europe, and of the European races throughout the world. Light once more has come into the world. It was Carlyle's peculiar merit that he disentangled the eternal truths underlying religion from the infinite cobwebs of superstition, and placed these

eternal truths among the certainties of human thought. Vain is it now for any man to plead that knowledge paralyses his energy, and that the fanatics are too strong for him. Not knowledge, but only stupidity, laziness, and self-indulgence can now make the intelligent man weaker than the fanatic.

This is not the place to discuss Carlyle's particular works. The creed implied in them all is our present concern, a creed the truth of which he has proved by an appeal to the facts of history. That the Universe is *not* a machine or piece of clockwork, but alive around us, full of wonder and mystery and beauty, speaking more plainly in the heart of man than in the roar of the sea, and that all human history shows us the workings of Him who walketh on the wings of the wind—this was Carlyle's faith, "capable," as he noted in his private journal, and proved by his life, "of being believed by oneself alone against all the whole world."

Let those who cling to obsolete formulas shriek against discoveries, or try by confused reasoning to show how doctrines they are paid to teach can be at once false *and* true. Professor Drummond was recently reported to have said that, after reading a page of Carlyle, he "felt as if he had been whipped."[1] It was a very natural sentiment; for, far as the sun is above the candles and magic lanterns of the earth, so far is the teaching of Carlyle above all the miserable squabbles and quibbles of system-mongers and creed-cobblers. Let the dead bury their dead, and Professor Drummond hold high debate with Herbert Spencer. Like to like! Those whose feeble eyesight shrinks from the light cannot be prevented keeping their eyes shut. Those whose minds' eyes are dim cannot be hindered doubting what they cannot see. There always have been and there always

[1] Report of a lecture at Melbourne.

will be materialists too, able to live *down* to their religion. The majority of such among modern men is even less overwhelming than among the lower animals.

> "Let Hercules himself do what he may,
> The cat will mew, the dog will have his day."

But still, though all religious legends have become as "tales that are told," still there are men who feel with Luther that it is "neither safe nor prudent to do aught against conscience," or to omit doing aught that conscience bids them do. These men are not ready to speak of conscience; but they are honestly capable of listening to it, and discriminating it from the "shriek of self-love." These are the men capable of insight into facts, capable of discriminating truth from fiction, and therefore, even in a time of spiritual paralysis, capable of really believing whatever they see to be true. They are the "Ironsides" of the world, the only true "salt of the earth."

So far as such men bear rule in the practical affairs of any nation, that nation is strong; so far, and no farther; and in the wildest chaos it is at least always possible for such men, by speaking truth and doing righteousness, to earn that peace of heart which passeth understanding, and which cannot be won by any other means. To such men Carlyle is a heroic guide and teacher, to whom "the inspiration of the Almighty" gave understanding. He understood all modern science and welcomed it; yet he believed in duty, and humbly walked with God all the days of his life.

Carlyle's religion was a thing of practice rather than of precept. His example is the best of his teaching. His life was spent in habitual *work*. "Doing anything not wicked is better than doing nothing," he remarked in his "Reminiscences"; and his was thorough work,

as of a man who put his conscience into all he did. He was just and pure as well as wise, with the keenest sense of humour and the readiest and tenderest sympathy with suffering. In an age of quacks, it was difficult to understand him, for there was nothing of the quack about him. There is perhaps nothing more notable in what he wrote in his Journal than the fact that he wrote such thoughts there, and never spoke of them unnecessarily. His Journal cannot be understood unless we remember that it is not a literary composition. He never dreamed that it would be read by any other than himself. Even Mr. Froude, the hero of the love-letter breach of trust, had apparently no intention at first of printing the Journal.[1]

Nor did Carlyle willingly speak of what has been called the consolation of religion—the hope of life after death. In his mind the strongest hope, the most passionate longing did not hide the limits of human knowledge; yet when she whom he most loved and the many friends and relatives to whom he was so passionately attached had departed before him, his looks were eagerly bent after them. His thoughts were often with them. Walking with a much-loved old friend in those years, he often walked long in silence, ejaculating once or twice, "Ay, me," and no other words at all.

An intelligent newspaper correspondent reports thus the talk of a Chelsea tobacconist with whom Carlyle dealt and who knew him well. The time spoken of was some years after the death of Mrs. Carlyle.

"'At what time did Mr. Carlyle generally come out?'

"'Only in the morning, about nine or ten o'clock, with his niece, and about midnight alone.'

[1] Mr. F.'s "T. C.," 1795-1835. Preface, pp. xiv, xv. But in this case there was no express prohibition violated by Mr. Froude, and in printing extracts from the Journal I think he did well.

"'At midnight?'

"'Yes, he used to go out nearly always when it was fine. He went on to the old bridge, generally. I have seen him often when I have been coming home from Battersea late. The old bridge used to be very lonely then. He would stay there for an hour together, leaning on the rail in one of the recesses of the bridge, always on the side next town. He never spoke then.' . . . 'I expects he was a thinkin',' said Mr. Nicholas."

On 14th October 1869, Carlyle noted in his Journal what his night thoughts had been:—

"Three nights ago, stepping out after midnight with my *final* pipe, and looking up into the stars, which were clear and numerous, it struck me with a strange new kind of feeling: Hah! in a little while I shall have seen you also for the last time. God Almighty's own Theatre of Immensity, the Infinite made palpable and visible to me, that also will be closed, flung to in my face, and I shall never behold that either any more. And I knew so little of it, real as was my effort and desire to know. The thought of this eternal deprivation—even of this, though this is such a nothing in comparison" (with the loss of his wife, he meant)—"was sad and painful to me. And then a second feeling rose on me, 'What if Omnipotence, which has developed in me these pieties, these reverences and infinite affections, should actually have said, Yes, poor mortals. Such of you as have gone so far shall be permitted to go farther. Hope. Despair not!' I have not had such a feeling for many years back as at that moment, and so mark it here."

A few months later, his old friend Thomas Erskine died—"another of my few last links severed." Charles Dickens followed soon. To become thus more and more lonely every year is the common lot of all who live to be old, but it comes with strange new bitterness to

each. To Carlyle each new bereavement seems to have accentuated the greatest loss of all. He lived nearly fifteen years after his wife, and never ceased to mourn her :—

> "Time but the impression stronger" made,
> "As streams their channels deeper wear."

There was a stanza of Burns' poetry sometimes on his lips :—

> "Had we never loved sae kindly,
> Had we never loved sae blindly,
> Never met, or never parted,
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

Broken-hearted, yet not without hope. It is in the darkness of night that the stars are visible, and thus soliloquised Carlyle, looking back to what had been, and forward to the mysteries no eye can pierce.

"Reminiscences too without limit" occupy my time. "Of prospects nothing possible except what has been common to me with all old wise men since the world began. Close by lies the *great secret*, but impenetrable (is, was, and must be so) to terrestrial thoughts for evermore. Perhaps something! perhaps *not* nothing, after all! God's will, there also, be supreme. If we are to meet! Oh, Almighty Father, if we are! But silence! silence!"

CHAPTER XLVII

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CARLYLE

THOMAS CARLYLE cannot be described by any formula or label. He was *not* a mere religious teacher, such as the common archbishop or cardinal or evangelical stump-orator—spiritual mummies, intellectually dead long ago, swathed hand and foot in bandages, with spices enough, which but prolong decay.

To superficial observers he seemed a "mere man of letters." But he was the Hero as man of letters, and lived the ideal life which he held up for other literary men to follow. The poorest journalist who had cherished his self-respect must have felt his heart swell within him on learning how a Rothschild had offered Carlyle a blank cheque for an essay—in vain. Nor has Carlyle been without followers, as he certainly was not without predecessors, in the high and noble view he took of his calling.

And yet no one could convey other than a false notion of him by calling him a "mere man of letters." A distinguished living politician once said, "Christ was an agitator." True, but such labels are misleading, and convey no more real information than the interesting details that Christ probably wore sandals and Thomas Carlyle boots.

Thomas Carlyle was a living all-round man of transcendent genius, who lived and worked till recently among us.

The mission of his life was to teach the English-speaking races that the "Soul of the Universe is just,"

to show them the beauty of wisdom and the eternal infinite difference between right and wrong, to teach them that genuine work, which had been fancied a curse, was a wholesome blessing and the only true source of honour, to plead the cause of the poor as no man ever pleaded it before, and to admonish the people and governors of England with the emphasis of a Hebrew seer and the wisdom of a Shakespeare and a Goethe. The English-speaking races were not accustomed to be so addressed by literary men, and it was some time before they would listen, "for too much truth at first sight ne'er attracts." But gradually, on both sides of the Atlantic, there were found men to listen and understand, and to believe in Carlyle's teaching and act upon it.

Already his influence can be traced even in political history, both foreign and domestic; and where the tendencies of the moment seem most hopelessly at variance with what he advised, there are signs of change. For example, his contempt for parliaments as governing bodies and for stump-orators as administrators are sentiments that do not appear so very peculiar now as when first expressed. But centuries must pass before the full effects of his teaching can be visible.

Even now, however, the truth and wisdom and poetic beauty of his historical writings are plain to most men, and all can see that Prince Bismarck wrote with the full insight and sincerity of genius the simple truth and no more, when he wrote to Carlyle: "You have placed before the Germans our great Prussian King in his full figure, like a living statue. What you said long years ago of the Hero as Author—that he is under the noble necessity of *being true*—has been fulfilled in yourself."[1]

That men are all brothers, and that no man is made

[1] Letter of December 2, 1875.

better than another by the possession of capital, fine clothes, titles, and "position"—these are fundamental truths which Carlyle insisted on, and all men are beginning more and more to realise. That men are unequal he also taught, and he showed how self-respect was compatible with reverence and impossible without it, by teaching men to take pride in their manhood as opposed to their possessions and titles, and to give honour not to commonplace men with wealth, position, and decorations, but to brave, wise, and good men, however situated. He showed us the reverence that exalts us, and bade us revere those men we really could revere with all our hearts, those whose *souls* were superior. He would have us set up our true heroes, Luther, Shakespeare, Cromwell, for example, to name only three, on the pedestals from which we have cleared away the images of innumerable unclean tailor-made quacks of all kinds. The Jews worshipping the golden calf, the Egyptians adoring holy he-goats, were not more pitiable than the English setting up such idols as too often deface our public places.

Carlyle wished to raise us from our degradation, and make us strive to be worthy of the best of our ancestors. So he laboured with all his might to hold the mirror up to Nature, and teach us the truth of this Universe, by helping us to see men and things as they are. In "practical" life he was not much permitted to mingle, but overwhelming pity and wrath against injustice drove him into it more than once. It was he who in a practical way raised the "Condition of England" question, now becoming somewhat urgent. The unnoticed children of the gutters, the Lancashire weavers dying unheeded of starvation, were pitied by him. No man ever loved his fellow-men more than Carlyle did. It was because he loved them that he loathed whatever degraded them.

"He forgives and loves everybody," wrote Emerson, "and wishes each to struggle on in his own place and arrive at his own ends," always provided, I may add, that fair play is allowed to all and no mean advantage taken. So loving a man was he that if at last with all our scribbling we can show him however faintly as he really was, the sneers of "men of the world" shall sink into silence for very shame. "In his heart, in his great thought, was a sanctuary for all the wretched."

The histories he wrote can be believed. Waggon-loads of new books have been published on the French Revolution. As a result, scarcely two pages could be filled with real corrections of the three volumes of Carlyle's account of it, and these corrections, rendered possible by the discovery of new evidence, are all of unimportant details. It would be very difficult to fill three pages more with the corrections of all his other writings. Brimful of humour and wisdom, his writings are also true, and worthy of earnest belief such as no book, except in olden times the Bible, ever received or deserved.

The wisdom Carlyle taught can be practised. The things he expected have happened or are happening. Some evils he foretold have been or are being prevented by means he advised. Other evils foreseen by him are now impending. Yet he was not a prophet of despair, but rather of hope. He was also, it must be noted, the only literary man of this century to whom practical men of the highest ability could and did look up. Hypocrites and knaves of all classes reviled him, and fancied he hated men because he hated hypocrisy and knavery. But that is no new thing in the world's history.

We babble glibly about modern "enlightenment." Even our scientific men, often our best and wisest, proud of abolishing Moses as a scientific authority, have not yet

had the sense to discern that they were merely following at a distance the Shakespeares, Goethes, and Carlyles who had displaced Moses' teaching long before.

Nearly all modern literature is twaddle or worthless fiction. It is the same sort of stuff that was *talked* in the woods by early mankind, and may be heard there to this day among "backward" races, a *little* nearer than we to our arboreal ancestors. Proud of our infinite library, we forget that idle talk is not the less worthless because it is printed now,—it is only so much the more a nuisance. To any one who sees through appearances into truth, it is plain that our enlightened age has little but superior "smith-work" to be proud of; and that alone is not good for much.

Our age is essentially not less bigoted, ignorant, and depraved than many preceding ages. Folly changes its fashions. Our idols are different; and that is too often the only difference. "In all times," wrote Goethe, serenely historical, "it is only individuals who labour to advance knowledge, and not the ages in which they live. It was the age that executed Socrates by poison, the age that burned Huss; ages have ever been the same."

"In all times" it is even so. Yet the generations of men differ one from another in their way of *receiving* wisdom, and so rendering it less or more difficult for the gifted individuals to serve them. Carlyle might have done better work, it has been suggested, if he had had a better audience. He himself thought that Shakespeare could have rendered us better service under happier conditions. It may be so; yet among the aboriginal cannibals, "Othello" and "Hamlet" could not have been composed, or "Sartor" and "Frederick" written. Among us "Sartor" not only was written, but, with whatever difficulties, published and read.

Thus it is clear that while the baser elements of

human nature remain the same, it is equally certain as Carlyle often showed that we are advancing, however slowly. The animal is better and better controlled by the soul within us, and, in the good old fight of mind against matter, much has been conquered, though "much remains to conquer still."

When Darwin was just taking his first degree at college, Carlyle was writing "Sartor Resartus." Let us take an extract from that book, for the benefit of those gentlemen who think that modern knowledge dates from the invention of the *evolution* shibboleth, as well as for the benefit of those who interpret too literally Carlyle's lamentations about our backslidings.

"Miserable indeed was the condition of the Aboriginal Savage, glaring fiercely from under his fleece of hair, which with the beard reached down to his loins, and hung round him like a matted cloak; the rest of his body sheeted in its thick natural fell. He loitered in the sunny glades of the forest, living on wild fruits; or, as the ancient Caledonian, squatted himself in morasses, lurking for his bestial or human prey; without implements, without arms, save the ball of heavy Flint, to which, that his sole possession and defence might not be lost, he had attached a long cord of plaited thongs; thereby recovering as well as hurling it with deadly unerring skill. . . .

"Reader, the heaven-inspired melodious Singer; loftiest Serene Highness; nay thy own amber-locked, snow-and-rose-bloom Maiden, worthy to glide sylphlike almost on air, whom thou lovest, worshippest as a divine Presence, which, indeed, symbolically taken, she is,—has descended, like thyself, from that same hair-mantled, flint-hurling Aboriginal Anthropophagus! Out of the eater cometh forth meat; out of the strong cometh forth sweetness. What changes are wrought, not by Time, yet in Time!

For not Mankind only, but all that Mankind does or beholds, is in continual growth, regenesis and self-perfecting vitality."

Human progress, however, though sure is not constant. The wisdom of Carlyle's upbraidings is sadly evident to the historical student, but meanwhile it is more profitable to note that his complaints were not inspired by personal grievances. There was a true piety of the heart in him, which prevented him from chafing overmuch at the "spurns, which patient merit of the unworthy takes." "Neglect, humiliation, all these things *are* good, if I will use them wisely." These are the words he wrote in his diary when suffering from his last bitter disappointment, in his struggle to find some *other* means of livelihood than literature. No wonder that in his old age he was able to note down:—

"What a finger of Providence, once more, was this of the Edinburgh Observatory; to which, had Jeffrey assented, I should certainly have gone rejoicing! These things really strike one's heart."

On the whole, considering what Goethe said, and remembering also how the Jews treated their prophets, and how the Spaniards treated Cervantes, and in short how men of wisdom usually are treated by common men, the reception Carlyle met was honourable to the English-speaking races, especially to those who dwelt in America. Nor did he complain about England. He loved his countrymen though he flattered them not; and he felt grateful towards them as he grew old. Here is what he wrote when the shadows were falling around him, and his long day's work was nearly ended:—

"On the whole, I feel often as if poor England had really done its very kindest to me, after all. Friends not a few I do at last begin to see that I have had all along, and these have all, or all but two or three, been

decorously silent: enemies I cannot strictly find that I have had any (only blind blockheads running athwart me on their own errand);—and as for the speaking and criticising multitude, who regulate the paying ditto, I perceive that their labours on me have had a two-fold result: 1°. That, after so much nonsense said, in all dialects, and so very little sense or real understanding of the matter, I have arrived at a point of indifferency towards all that, which is really very desirable to a human soul that will do well; and 2°. That, in regard to money, and payment &c. in the money kind, it is essentially the same. To a degree which, under *both* heads (if it were safe for me to estimate it), I should say was really a far nearer than common approach to completeness. And which, under both heads, so far as it *is* complete, means *victory*, and the very highest kind of 'success'! Thanks to poor anarchic crippled and bewildered England, then; hasn't it done its very *best* for me, under disguised forms; and seeming occasionally to do its *worst?* Enough of all that."[1]

He has passed away from among us, but his writings abide with us, a possession for ever. For him what did England do? It did—not burn him. Nay, in a clumsy roundabout fashion, it at last did give him a livelihood in return for his work. He might have met a worse fate elsewhere. England has no cause to be ashamed, when all things are considered. And since England still wishes to hear his voice, for his books still *sell*, there is one thing more to be done for his sake and our own, and that is to speak the truth, and believe and tell no more lies about him. I have faith in my countrymen that in the fulness of time that also shall be done. "In Switzerland," said Tyndall, "I live in the immediate presence of a mountain, noble alike in form and mass.

[1] "Reminiscences," vol. i. p. 127.

A bucket or two of water, whipped into a cloud, can obscure, if not efface, that lordly peak. You would almost say that no peak could be there. But the cloud passes away, and the mountain, in its solid grandeur, remains. Thus, when all temporary dust is laid, will stand out, erect and clear, the massive figure of Carlyle."

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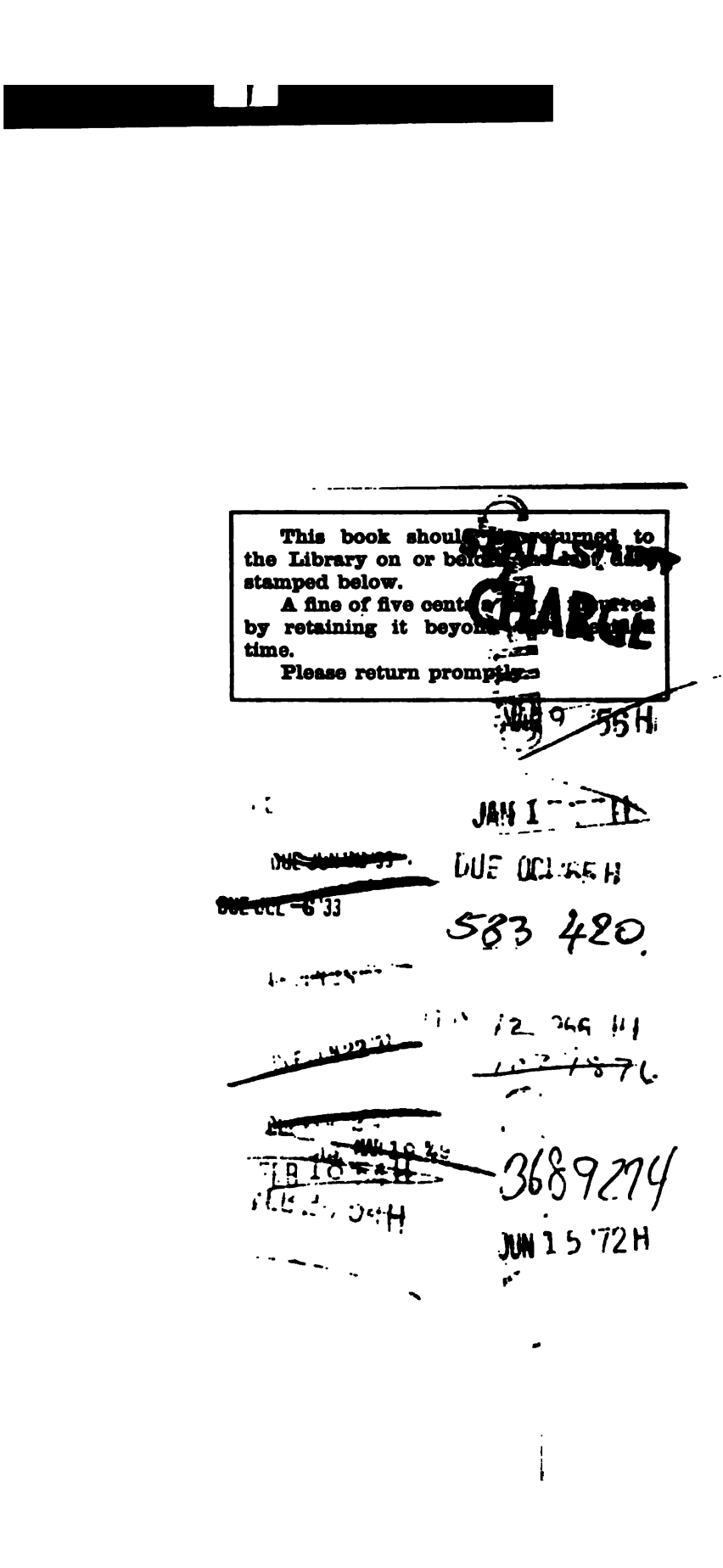
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